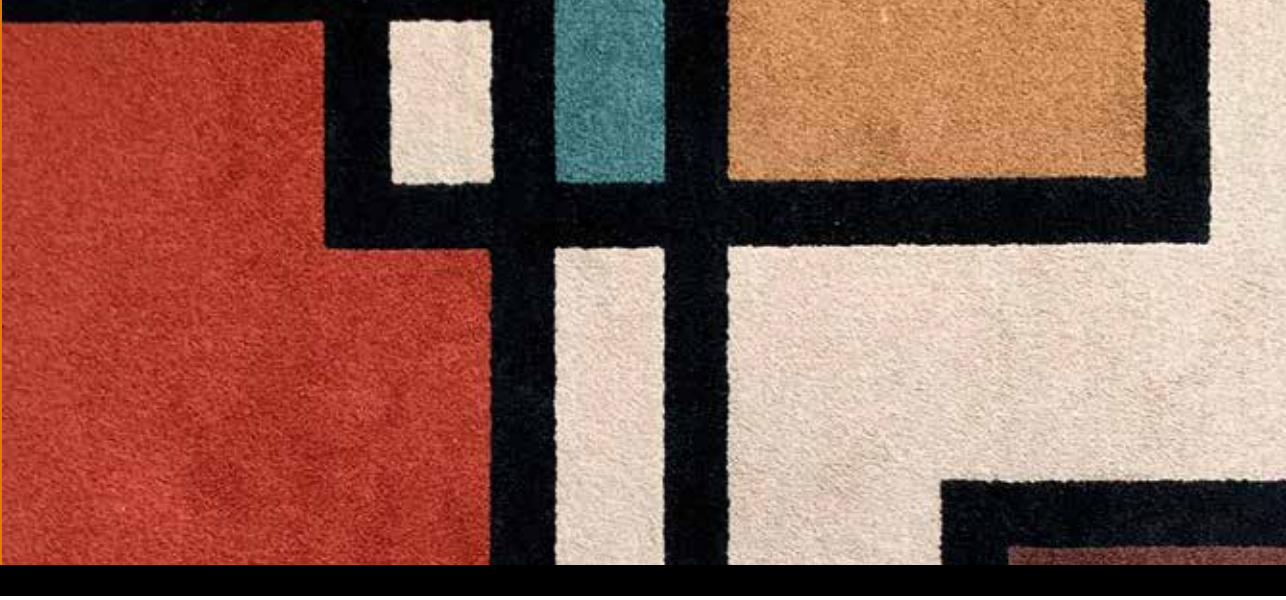


Oath Taking and the Transnationalism of Silence among Edo Female Sex Workers in Italy

Cynthia Olufade

African Studies Centre
Leiden

Universiteit
Leiden

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Dedication

To Charlo, Kay and Modu…with love…xx

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[Colophon]

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1 Background Information

1.1 Introduction

The Benin people believe that their history is written in their hearts and it is being passed from generation to generation through the art of folklore, music, dance, and traditional customs and practices. According to Mbiti (1997), "Africans have their own ontology which is both religious and anthropocentric in the sense that everything is seen in relation to man." Till today, this view is reflected in Benin's traditional system and in the lifestyle of Benin's people. Egharevba (1968) noted the existence of two words in Benin cosmology, 'Agbon' and 'Erimwin'. According to him, Agbon is the world as we see it, created by 'Osanobua' (God) and Benin people believe that all the happenings in Agbon are entirely controlled by the agents of Osanobua, i.e. the divinities. Erimwin is the invisible world populated by a variety of spirit beings such as Enikaro.

At the zenith of the Benin traditional system is the Oba, who is regarded as Osanobua's representative on earth, underneath him is a tightly knit structure administered through family heads, elders, quarter heads, and traditional chiefs.

An exploration of the traditional customs of the Benin people, their belief system, and its relationship with the practise of oath taking will provide a useful background in an attempt to unravel the concept of oaths and oath taking in Edo state and how it relates to transnational sex work.

Belief in God

In the conceptual life of traditional thinkers, the role of divine forces appears to be relevant. Benin traditional belief holds that the Supreme Deity is the ultimate power. This originates in the cosmology of the people and their understanding of cosmological ordering. The world is conceived as an orderly place in which all events have a reason and any occurrence has an explanation. It is also believed that there are numerous forces at work in the world. Gbadegesin (1991) opines that, "the higher the force is, the more

casually efficacious it is." Certainly, a common feature among various tribes in Africa is a belief in a Supreme Being who is attributed with the creation of the universe. This being has different names in different worldviews but nevertheless seems to be conceived in a similar vein and have similar attributes.

The Yoruba of West Africa conceive of 'Olodumare' as immortal. He is also referred to as 'Eleda' (creator), 'Aseda' (maker), and 'Elemi' (owner of divine breath), while among the Igbos, Chukwu is the name attributed to the Supreme Deity. Bradbury (1973) affirms that for the Benin people, Osanobua means, "the supplier of wealth, life, health and other necessities to maintain life and good living." The Benin believe that Osanobua created all things. They see Osanobua as the builder who conceived and designed the universe; he is viewed as the god of procreation, the giver of wealth, and the god of fertility, etc.

Osanobua did not just create the universe, He, according to Benin custom, laid down laws and statutes for the orderly and smooth-running of the world with Benin at the centre. The belief is that all the established laws and traditional customs of Benin were ordained by Osanobua himself for the ancient Benin Empire. The Benin people also believe that before a child is born into the world, he presents him- or herself before Osanobua to choose, receive, or have his destiny dictated to him. All the happenings in an individual's life are therefore believed to be predetermined by Osanobua, including their length of stay on earth.

Mbiti (1991) affirms that God is involved in the affairs of mankind and people experience his involvement in their daily lives. In Benin cosmology, the people believe that God is good to all men; they also attribute evil and misfortune to God. Whatever happens, whether good or bad, is said to have come from God. Happenings such as death, family troubles, poverty, mental issues, diseases, etc., are interpreted by the Benin as having emanated from God, either as a punishment or as reaction to them disobeying his instructions. Other natural disasters that plague humans in the form of flood, drought, mysterious deaths, epidemics, etc., are also generally attributed to a spirit being. If Osanobua is thought to be responsible, it is often believed to be a form of punishment. The presence of God in Benin cultural heritage helps to sustain a level of moral sanctity. His being helps to strengthen the cord that binds the Benin people under the socio-political structure known as the Benin kingdom, which has the Oba as the political and spiritual head.

Belief in Divinities

Divinities in Benin culture are believed to be agents of the Supreme Being as well as deified communal priests and ancestors. From their association with the Supreme Deity, it is believed that they possess supernatural attributes. Sodipo (1973) avers that 'Esu', the trickster in Yoruba cosmology, can change the natural course of something that had been preordained by 'Olodumare' and in defiance of the laid down laws of nature. This is why Sodipo (1973) observes that chief priests are usually consulted at the birth of a child to determine its destiny in life. The Benin people also believe that divinities are powerful agents of the Supreme.

Other agents can be ancestors who have died and become deified as well communal priests who were once members of the community. Gbadegesin (1991) reveals that, at death, these people are deified due to the amount of power available to them while alive or, in other cases, the sanctity of their behaviour while on earth. These powers are believed to be beyond natural or human means. 'Sango', the Yoruba god of thunder, who was a former king in the old Oyo Empire is an example of a deified ancestor. According to Sodipo (1973), Sango is described as a very powerful and famous ruler, who was feared and respected across regions during his reign. His powers were believed to be supernatural. Bradbury (1973), lists some major divinities in the Benin kingdom; these deities are believed to be the main agents of Osanobua and possess extraordinary powers. These agents have hierarchies, as Osanobua is known as a very orderly being; his divinities were ordered according to importance.

Olokun

Olokun is projected as the firstborn son of Osanobua, identified with the sea (*okun*), which is known as the great water of the earth. This deity is commonly associated with human fertility and wealth. Olokun is believed to be a supernatural being, dwelling in the realm of the natural; also regarded as nature spirit, Olokun belongs to a special class of non-human forces. To the Benin people, he is represented as a king sitting on his throne surrounded by his glory.

Ogun

Ogun is believed to be the bringer of civilization, who, according to Benin traditional belief, conquered the forest, opened the farmlands and carved out the roads; he is the deity in charge of metal. The Benin represents him as a human holding the axe and the cutlass.

Osun

Osun is the deity in charge of health and spiritual growth. According to Benin traditional belief, when an individual's Osun is growing he begins to have dreams of snakes. When the Osun becomes fully grown, snakes start coming out of a pot, this is why Osun is usually depicted as a man who has snakes and other reptiles coming out of his nostrils.

Oba

The reigning king is also regarded as a deity in Benin tradition. He is sanctioned by Osanobua to lead and protect the people. The Oba is in charge of the political and spiritual administration of the Benin people. Whatever sanction or decree the Oba gives is expected to be strictly adhered to as his words are regarded as the words of Osanobua himself. The ancient Benin Empire became famous as a result of its powerful monarchy that operates a smooth-running, centralized system with inbuilt checks and balances that promote healthy competition among the political institutions thus ensuring stability. The Oba took charge of regulating the socio-political and economic activities for the general well-being of the people of the kingdom.

Ovbhiemhe

Ovbhiemhe is regarded as the earth deity; Ovbhiemhe is subordinate to the Oba and is generally referred to as 'mother earth'. In Benin tradition, Ovbhiemhe is represented as a mother figure.

Oghiowhu

Oghiowhu has the power over life and death in Benin cosmology. He has a messenger known as Ofoe, who carries out all his commandments. He is represented with a human head, no torso but the hands and legs are seen as extended from the head. Oghiowhu, like Olokun, is also represented as a king but painted all red, signifying blood. Oghiowhu's messenger, Ofoe is quite similar to the Yoruba Esu, who is regarded as a trickster.

According to the tradition of the people of Benin, these deities are not worshipped, only God (Osanobua) is worshipped. The process is referred to in Benin dialect as '*awebo*' meaning propitiation, while ancestors, on the other hand, are venerated. There are other numerous smaller deities in Benin cosmology that also wield much power and respect among the people.

Worthy of note are implanted deities from other parts of the country. These deities were carried into Benin, sometimes as spoils of war, at other times as the fame and popularity of the deity grew. Most popular among the implanted deities are:

Ayelala

Ayelala is a deified goddess whose origin, according to Awolalu (1968), can be traced back to the Ilaje people who occupy a riverine area in present-day Ondo state. The cult of Ayelala rose out of the vicarious sacrificial compensation for the life of an Ijaw slave woman, killed in substitution for the atonement of the sin of a runaway Ilaje adulterous man. As a scapegoat, the slave woman was made to bear the consequences of his sin, an act that caused serious disaffection among the Ilajes and Ijaws of the state. While being sacrificed, it was claimed that the slave woman, in her pain and anguish, muttered the word '*ayelala*', meaning 'the world is a mystery'. From that point, Ayelala became the name by which she was known and called. Awolalu explains further that, before the sacrifice of killing the slave woman was carried out, there was a covenant of reconciliation and ritual kinship made between the Ilaje and the Ijaw on some strict terms, which concluded with the fact that Ayelala was to kill all oath defaulters. Before she was sacrificed however, Ayelala made a solemn vow to bear witness to and punish non-compliance to the terms of the covenant and all future covenants to be reached in her name. Ayelala eventually became deified after her death when it was observed that several deaths occurred in default of the covenant sealed with Ayelala's blood.

This led to the popularity of the goddess as a deity that upholds justice and protects morality; it also accounted for its spread even to Benin.

Igbile

Okpewho (2017) observes that the Ijaw from Niger Delta region had some fairly attested relations with the Benin people, while Egharevba (1966), maintains that the Ijaw were among the subject tribes of the (ancient) Benin Empire. Fagg (1978) affirms that the stylized masks of the Igbile cult, with images of aquatic reptiles emanating from various parts of the head, are of Ijaw origin, suggesting that the Igbile cult, whose masks were part of the spoils of war taken from dancers who joined Benin soldiers resisting the British punitive expedition in 1897.

Oath Taking and Benin Society

In ancient Benin, the taking and administering of oaths became a necessity in marital scenes, during family disputes, for detection of culprit(s) in cases of theft, in land dispute cases, and during misunderstandings between neighbours and friends. The practice of oath taking cuts across all levels of society, from the Oba, who takes and renews sacred oaths on a daily basis, to the chiefs, who must either take oaths themselves or preside over issues that are resolved through oath taking, the elders, who take charge of minor quarrels and disputes among the family members under him, and even ordinary citizens, who make venerations to their ancestors from time to time.

Marriage

Marriage in Benin society, according to Ikelegbe (2014), is a formidable institution imbued with fidelity and trust. It is contracted between two families (not two individuals). Once a woman is married into another family, she automatically becomes the man's property. Immediately after the marital rites, she is summoned to meet her husband's family. In this meeting, she is expected to articulate all her past encounters with other men, especially men she has been sexually involved with. If her past sexual encounters are numerous, she is expected to perform a specific rite of throwing some grains of sand into the air. Where the sanctity of marriage is broken, the

wife involved is forced to make a confession before the ancestry altars of her husband's family.

Some other instances where wives are made to swear or confess before altars include:

- The inauguration of a new wife into the family
- The observance of unhealthy occurrences in the family
- Suspicion of a wife's infidelity
- Allegiance to the husband

The Benin tradition sees a woman as purely and specifically sacred before and especially after getting married. Some customary taboos are placed on the wife so that she does not violate, wittingly or unwittingly, these taboos. If she is suspected, under any circumstances, of violating these rules, she is made to swear an oath in the presence of her husband's ancestry deity. If a woman is humiliated and made to swear an oath publicly, what happens to men who engage in such behaviours? Are they also subjected to similar treatments in such circumstances? Attoh (2007) aptly captures the Benin situation in 'Chattels of the Families: Trafficking of Young Women as Gender Violence'. Here, she opines that it is a consequence of a society deeply ingrained in the practice of patriarchy and female subjugation and that the woman/girl becomes a property in the hands of husbands, or fathers, who are willing to trade them off or subject them to unequal treatment.

Conflict Resolution

Conflicts arise over issues of territory, succession, inheritance, etc. Oghi (2014) observes that when disputes arose over boundary matters, traditionally they were handled by elders-in-council presided over by the Oba who remains the paramount ruler. Where, however, they occurred at the village or dukedom level, 'Enigies' or 'Odionwere' took charge of them, while difficult cases were referred to the palace of the Oba whose pronouncement was binding on all parties.

Disputes were tabled first with the elders of the community by way of traditional summons, which in most cases is honoured by all the parties involved. In cases where a party decides not to heed such a summon, the punishment is banishment from the community. All the parties involved were given a fair hearing before decisions were made. On settling the of

land disputes, the demarcation of a boundary or territory is marked by the planting of an '*Ikhimwin*' tree.

Disputes related to inheritance and hereditary titles are also adjudicated. Only eldest male children whose mothers were traditionally married to the deceased man had the right to inherit or succeed their fathers. This is also subject to the satisfactory performance of the necessary rites and oath taking rituals related to succession. According to oral accounts, these rites are handled by the Oba, who performs them in line with the laid down traditions and customs of the land. In cases where there is a serious dispute over succession, traditional measures are taken to ascertain the entitled party. Two processes are observed: First, the claimants to the throne were summoned to a cult presided over by the chief priest of the kingdom and then oaths were administered to them. Rituals are also performed and the spirit of the ancestors invoked. The right successor was then determined by the outcome of the test. In other instances, the property in question may have been willed verbally to a particular individual before the demise of the holder. In such a case, other family members must have witnessed it before the property in question can be transferred. The witnesses are summoned to testify to the claim after being subjected to oaths enjoining them to speak the truth or else face the wrath of the ancestors. From the above, it is clear that the Benin people had and still maintain a traditional structure for resolving conflicts of various degrees via a traditional process that is deeply entrenched in the principle of oaths and oath taking.

Commerce and Trading

Ancestors are inherent to the day to day business of the Benin people. They are called upon for guidance, protection from evil, and to guarantee abundant sales.

Farmers perform specific rituals at certain stages of the farming season, calling upon the divine to ensure a good yield; they make sacrifices as necessary and keep to oaths and promises sworn. When diseases or drought threaten to spoil their yields, they also perform specific rituals to appease the gods.

Artisans and other semi-skilled labourers also maintain their relationship with the divine. Specific days are designated for sacrifices, and whenever any form of misunderstanding or dispute occurs, peace is restored by the administration of oaths to determine the erring party.

Traders and market women also perform rituals and rites to the god who brings/multiplies wealth. In cases where fire breaks out in the marketplace, they try to find out what the gods have to say about the occurrence. Sacrifices are also made when the need arises for atonement and in cases where instructions are given, they are generally carried out to the letter. Whenever issues relating to theft or burglary arise, the gods are also summoned to come to their aid. Oaths are also administered when disputes arise amongst traders.

Sex Work

The Binis in Edo State, Nigeria, have a highly patriarchal social organization and a long history of male migration prior to colonial times (Omorodion 2011). With the dominance of men in migration statistics, women and, by implication, wives, are left behind intentionally and circumstantially in many communities (Mondain and Diagne, 2013). There is, however, some evidence showing the economic empowerment of women and wives of migrants in certain communities in Nigeria. For instance, in Benin, the impact of migration on the status of women was evident in the number of female-headed households and landladies emerging in the 21st century (Oke 2001; Osezua 2013). These women began to look elsewhere for work when Nigeria experienced a major economic downturn in the late 1980s. Indeed, they went looking for work beyond the country's shores, going, for example, to Italy with work visas to pick tomatoes, but ended up in sex work. Some return rich and are held up as examples of success. According to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), 90 per cent of trafficked women of African origin in Italy engaging in sex work are from Edo State and have taken oaths at a shrine in the state. These trafficked women/girls are managed by madams (usually former sex trafficking victims themselves).

Currently, the situation in the city of Benin reflects what has been discussed so far. The Benin people have a culture of oaths and oath taking as they believe that the ideal is to call upon the divine to witness and authenticate whatever issue is at hand.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Numerous studies have been carried out on sex work, prostitution, and related concepts. The focus in the past was on the networks involved (Aghatise 2004), the issue of morality and the recruitment of underage girls for prostitution

(Bamgbose 2002), and the examination of sex work from the perspective of transnational organized crime and security implications (Babatunde 2014). More recent studies have added the subject of voodoo to the discourse. Van Dijk (2001) and Ikeora (2016) examined sex work from the angle of the role of African traditional religion.

These works have neglected important cultural variables in the sex work phenomenon in Edo State, specifically, the extent of ritual practices involved in taking oaths, consequences for oath defaulters, and the role oath taking plays in sustaining the sex work industry.

On a more general level, previous understanding of oath taking in the context of sex work has been scanty. This study therefore intends to examine the culture of the Edo (specifically Benin) people as it relates to the tradition of oath taking. The study adopted an anthropological methodology to explore the issue of how Edo transnational sex workers take spirituality with them to different countries of destination and how this informs their silence while suffering exploitation.

1.3 Research Questions

1. How does oath taking aid Edo transnational sex work?
2. How is the idea of 'transnational silence' implicated in the political economy of Edo transnational sex work?
3. What is the perception of the Edo people towards sex work?
4. What processes are involved in oath taking rituals that ensure the silence of Edo transnational sex workers?
5. How do the perceived consequences of default sustain Edo transnational sex work?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to document how Edo transnational sex workers take their spirituality with them to different countries of destination and how this sustains the sex work trade but also perpetuates the exploitation of sex workers.

The objectives include:

- To examine how oath taking is exploited for Edo transnational sex work.
- To document the significance of 'transnational silence' in the political economy of Edo transnational sex work.
- To examine the perception of Edo people towards sex work.
- To examine the processes involved in oath taking rituals and how these translate into silence among transnational sex workers.
- To determine the consequences of default and how this is exploited to sustain the industry and perpetuate the exploitation of Edo transnational sex workers.

1.5 Significance of the study

To scrutinize the dimensions of oath taking and silence among Edo transnational sex workers, this study employed anthropological methodologies to provide another perspective to the discourse aimed at examining how the sex work industry in Edo state is sustained and how it perpetuates exploitation.

1.6 Scope of the study

This study was primarily focused on investigating oath taking as a practice among Edo transnational sex workers and how this informs their silence throughout their transnational sojourn in Italy.

1.7 Operational definitions of terms

Sex worker – a woman/girl trafficked to Italy for the purpose of having sexual intercourse in exchange for money or material gains.

Madam – the concept of madam is quite fluid; its application and meaning are contingent upon context. The madam is a 'mother' who helps young and impoverished girls reach Europe in order to have a 'better life'. From another point of view, the madam is the head of the network that sometimes resorts to physical violence to assert control over the sex workers under her. The

madam is a conceptual category in the network and can either be a man or a woman; the majority, however, are women.

Sponsor – an individual who acts as a middleman or sometimes a person who literally buys women and girls from Benin, with the aim of transporting them to Italy in order to sell them to a madam for a profit.

Trolley/Trafficking Agent –the administrator/guide of a particular network. His (they are usually men) responsibilities include recruiting and organizing the women and girls for oath taking rituals and guiding their passage to Italy via Libya. In most cases, the agent organizes travel documents for the women and girls.

Juju – according to the dictionary definition, juju implies the use of fetish, charms, and amulets among West Africans. This study understands juju in terms of how it is used by returnees as an object (pieces of stick, clothing, body parts, effigy, etc.) that has undergone some ritual process and has the ability to be used for good or evil. It also refers to a person involved in the practice, i.e. juju man or juju woman.

Victims – anyone taken to Italy with/without full knowledge of the potential job is a victim. A victim in this case might/might not have prior knowledge of the line of work they are expected to do in Italy.

Enhancers – specific materials /objects given to the victims by their guardian, parents or juju priest(ess) to make them more successful in their line of work.

Ogbelegba – The sex workers' term for police in Italy, this was used by the girls /women on the street. In Edo, the word means someone who disturbs or scatters.

Eke – another slang term for the police used by the girls and women on the street in Europe.

Hustler – a girl or woman who engages in sex work in Italy considers herself a hustler and she considers the 'job' 'hustlement' or hustle.

NAPTIP - national agency for the prohibition of trafficking in persons. A federal agency set up by the Nigerian government to combat trafficking locally and otherwise.

2 Literature Review and the Theoretical Framework

2.1 Oath Taking and Work Ethics

An oath is a promise; it is a covenant, usually between people or between a human(s) and God/god. The need to take an oath rests on the human tendency to renege on an agreement or promise. Hence, the calling of the divine to uphold the terms of a contract or agreement becomes a necessity.

To establish the concept of oath taking in a work context, the European Asylum Office Information Report (EASO, 2014) offers an illustration of oath taking practices from a sex work perspective. Plambech (2014) highlights the definition of juju as a common way of expressing the use of traditional means of healing and magic, albeit one that does not necessarily connote evil in the Nigerian context. She opines that a sense of alarm usually follows when juju or elements of voodoo accompany any operation in the West. This implies a lopsided understanding of the phenomenon by Western actors. This view needs to be adequately corrected as it has implications for sex workers in their Western host countries. By illustrating the dimensions of juju, Plambech (2014) points out that the practice provides an avenue for understanding the network of operations that engages its use in the context of migration and sex work. This approach reveals more about the society that practises it than the trafficking network itself. In another vein, Cherti et al. (2013) observe that the effects using juju may not be present in all cases of trafficking at the point of recruitment and, in fact, may occur only later, usually once the victim has begun working on the streets. Thus, Carling (2005) avers that voodoo only becomes dangerous when there is talk of an oath being defaulted on.

The aforementioned EASO report outlines the main components of juju oaths in relation to sex work:

- the oath is administered in a ritual
- the use of animal blood in the ritual
- the addition of specific parts of the oath taker's body and the incantations/ wordings of the oath

Garcia (2008), emphasizing the wordings of oaths, states that the oath is sealed between the trafficker and the victim with the different responsibilities spelled out to each party. The traffickers agree to bear the cost of the journey to the European destination, while the victim pledges to reimburse the trafficker, obey instructions, and keep the activities of the network from the authorities. This implies that the oaths are not just oaths to ensure silence, as the wordings also reinforce loyalty and a subtle dependence on the trafficker for protection since the authorities are a no-go area. However, the use of juju as a means of coercion, according to Cherti et al. (2013), does not occur in all cases. In fact, their study reveals that only about 28 percent of trafficked girls had been exposed to juju and not all the oaths sworn are directly related to cases of trafficking. This is buttressed by Pascoal's (2012) observation that a number of trafficked girls choose not to take part in the oath taking ritual due to their convictions that are deeply rooted in Christianity. However, a more recent study by Ikeora (2016) claims that most of the victims who had been trafficked to the UK had, at one point or another, sworn oaths to seal the pact between both parties. This assertion underscores the practice of syncretism, especially among Christians, who consult other means in search of healing or answers to life's issues. Carling (2006) and Nwogu (2008) argue that Pentecostal churches also offer prayers to legitimize such deals. Meanwhile, Van Dijk (2001) notes that the oaths taken aim to frighten victims by referencing terminal illness and death to ensure compliance. From another perspective, the oaths taken have a dual function as they serve to aid the smooth running of the 'job', to protect adherents, and, of course, to instil obedience (UNICRI, 2010).

Analysing the concept of oath taking in traditional parlance, Jegede (2011) emphasizes that the need to take an oath arises when the truth of an action or occurrence cannot be ascertained. He explains further that an oath also serves as a means of alerting the divine to the credibility of a matter that could have occurred in the past or will be a product of the future. The study reveals that the gravity of the consequence of reneging on a promise or covenant speaks to the authenticity of the oath taken. At this point, Oji et al. explain that when there are consequences for defaulting on an oath then deterrence is achieved. Generally, these consequences range from grave sickness to mental illness (Van Dijk 2001), death still serves as a threat to ensure strict adherence to the demands of the oath. In the context of transnationalism and sex work, the fealty oaths illustrated by Jegede (2011) shed further light on the origin of the oath and the parties involved. Drawing on instances in the Middle Ages, between lords and their vassals, the practice of oath taking encourages a structure based on the principle of loyalty. The vassal pledges allegiance

to his lord (the major), who agrees to protect and care for his minor. In case of violation, the fealty is disregarded; this may bring an onslaught of consequences on the defaulter.

The Concept of Silence and Work Ethics

The conceptualization of silence as a phenomenon conjures a plethora of meanings to different audiences. Ganzevoort (2015), in his study of anthropological perspectives of silence in religion and films, observes that silence is an avenue for the viewer or cultural actor to navigate the dimensions of a work of art or any given situation. This means that silence can speak to different meanings at the same time depending on the cultural context it is used in and also the understanding of such cultural traditions. Thus, silence becomes an essential part of the ways in which meanings can be derived, especially from films, movies and motion pictures as well as in religious spheres. For example, the examination of silence draws one to observe other concepts such as meditation and, of course, communication with a higher power. To Ganzevoort (Ibid.), silence illuminates the complexities of presence and absence, substance and emptiness, speech and gestures. It expands the dimensions of meaning to embody other forms of non-verbal communication, which broadens the discourse on identity and identity formation. The character of silence can be established in different ways to constitute a form that implies adherence to society's conventions and, in another vein, to create a balance in power and power relations that is known to be a major source of tension among individuals and communities. Silence is also employed to affirm authority in other contexts and to "create the opportunity of coordinated action" (Ibid.). In this sense, the 'voice' of silence can be loud enough to be heard and understood over other means of communication and expresses ideas that cannot be trivialized by putting them into words. As Van Gennip and Turner have argued, "silence is an anti-structure that opens up the patterned world of action and meaning by creating gaps and fissures" (cited in Ganzevoort 2015:132). Ganzevoort (Ibid.) argues that there are four categories of silence:

"Repressive silence" as the name implies, refers to silencing the voice in relation to the other, which prevents the other from speaking in order to conceal the truth. Here, he observes that by repressing the voice, the use of power and, in other instances, authority is affirmed to silence the truth. "Transforming silence suggests silencing the voice in relation to the self. Here, the involvement of the alternative to break the silence or not is

established. There is no repression of the power of speech; silence becomes a choice to strip oneself of engaging in speech. It is quite interesting as this type of silence expands the frontiers of meaning to new levels that involve personal interpretations and the engagement of imagination, thereby creating intrigues. For the third category, Ganzevoort stresses "ominous silence", which is a more impersonal type and is a form of silence in relation to the world, especially to time and space. It is laced with a deep sense of ambiguity, not revealing all of itself to create a sense of urgency and danger that one cannot fully capture since its ramifications are out of reach. This is intended to simultaneously fascinate and to create a sense of foreboding. The final category of silence is a "silence in relation to the sacred". It involves a receptive way of opening oneself up to the divine by entering into silence. As William James aptly captures (cited in Ganzenvoort 2015:136) silence in this context suggests "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider divine." The deliberate act of reception and letting go of the functions of the senses in this case is not only employed in spiritual or metaphysical realms, it is also engaged in alternative medicine and during acts of torture to facilitate an altered state of consciousness (Ganzevoort 2015). The transcending experience of silence therefore endangers receptivity: an openness that allows for diverse experiences to occur.

By engaging the different forms that silence takes, Ganzevoort presents an excellent revelation of how the self relates to others through silence. It is arguable that where these forms overlap in the daily activities and struggles of people, silence can begin from the angle of repression and translate to other forms while adapting new trends.

Other studies on silence have examined it from gender relations as a product of patriarchy that subjugates the 'other' to an existence in which different forms of silence must be embraced as a subtle means of living in denial. Akpan (2011) links the issues of women's subordination and disempowerment to the phenomenon of widespread violence on women and the resulting proliferation of silence in a manner that becomes a breeding ground for more physical, emotional, or psychological violence to take place. The study reads silence as a socially constructed phenomenon and a way of expressing the failures of speech in given contexts. In this regard, the culture of silence that permeates violent acts serves to promote the phenomenon by creating an enabling environment for perpetrators who dwell on the inability to listen to or comprehend the intricacies of the situation because words are not used. In this way, silence becomes an expression of grief and anguish for the victim,

who cannot articulate the pain as a result of a culture that seeks to blur the lines between the victim and perpetrator in issues like sexual assault. Here, the narrative always favours the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, for Fivush (2010), the social construction of silence in autobiographical and cultural narratives suggests that cultural narratives construct silence and voice in a way that defines the self. By engaging certain socio-cultural paradigms, the study examines silence along the lines of "being silenced and being silent." While the latter is an expression of power dynamics (Ganzenvoort 2015), which is repressive in nature, the former underscores a voluntary understanding of not using speech, for example in order to be receptive to a higher order (Ibid.). In an interesting twist, the research suggests that shared understanding of a practice can call for silence, which can, in turn, empower the tradition in question, thus implying that the introduction of speech in this context translates into loss of power. The study concludes by highlighting the relevance of voice and silence in discourses centred on memory and identity.

General Perception of Sex Work

The dimensions of trafficking and the sex work network in/from Edo State in Nigeria has received serious academic attention, not least from Aghatise (2002), who examines the network from the Italian perspective, and from Iocono (2014), who scrutinized the actors in the network in an effort to create a distinction between victims and perpetrators but, in the process, found that the distinctions were blurred as grey areas abound. Other scholars have examined the phenomenon from a cultural perspective thus highlighting the role of the family and also the community in the trafficking process (Attoh 2007). More recent studies have interrogated the culture from the prism of finding solutions for anti-trafficking agencies to work out a panacea (Ikeora 2016) and in Whelan (2017), the practice of sex work and its institutional embeddedness in Nigeria was examined.

Attoh (2007), who makes an attempt to illustrate the prevalence of trafficking of young women, contends that the phenomenon is a consequence of a society deeply ingrained in the practice of patriarchy and female subjugation, thereby reducing a woman to a product in the hands of a society governed by men who are ready to trade her off. The research scrutinizes the role of the family as well as husbands in trafficking cases and concludes that it is more of an economic venture than a moral matter, with heads of families actively

involved in the trafficking process in order to enrich themselves. This means that, on the one hand, the girls are seen as a commodity by their communities and, on the other hand, chattels of their families.

Attoh argues that the trafficking process is sustained as an avenue for wealth creation, but also as a means of reaffirming the subjugation of womenfolk, who are considered inferior and subjected to unequal treatment, thus sustaining the staging of violence against them. The paper however, fails to acknowledge the role of older matriarchs as priestesses (EASO, 2014), or as mothers of victims of trafficking who are decisive figures in the trafficking process and influential in sustaining the trade. Another dimension to this is the recognition that these older women have, in one way or the other, conformed to the demands of the patriarchy and gender inequality through a socialization process over time whereby the practice has become the norm and have led a generation of younger women to believe in it. This speaks to the sustenance of the network as well as acceptance of the phenomenon by members of the society in which it is practiced.

Odorige (2016) speaks to the question of remittance as a form of acceptance of the phenomenon. The article begins with a historical introduction to migration and also reflects on the push and pull factors, using the illustration of Ghaffari and Singh's (2000) centripetal and centrifugal forces that obligate the need to move. The push factors relate to economy, wars, ethnic, and religious persecutions; the pull is centred on issues concerning security, stability, and better infrastructure, which make the destination countries attractive to prospective migrants. In a historical background of the Edo people's relationship with sex work, the study suggests that, historically, the Edo community did not permit the growth of such clandestine activity as it was predisposed to communal living. This implies that the action of a single member of the family might signal shame or reproach on the whole family (Ayittey 1991, cited in Odorige 2016). Odoridge illustrates the difference between then and now, evident in Anderson's text, which makes a case for the creation of the state as it is today. It is a product of the break away from communal practice that gave rise to the individualism that is known to advance the course of social problems, which sex work is a part of. More generally, the study acknowledges the role of remittances in Benin society as a major factor that influences the acceptance of the sex work phenomenon, adding that the society thrives on the flow of cash that comes from individuals in Europe or elsewhere who may be engaged in illegal activities. But the fact that these remittances translate into wealth and development means the families and communities involved overlook the criminality of the work and the emphasis

is placed on the returns. The implication over time becomes is that success is tied to economic growth and if migrants, in this case, transnational sex workers, can send substantial amounts back home in cash or kind, whatever business such migrants are involved in is to be celebrated. While Odorige's paper presents an interesting argument, it is silent on the role of religion in the acceptance or rejection of the phenomenon, especially as religion plays a vital role in the construction of morality (Turner Bryan 2003). Another approach would have been to compare how traditional African religion influences the sex work business, specifically, the use of Ayelala or any other preferred deity/god; this would shed more light on the acceptance of the phenomenon in the state. However, the research was able to capture the discourse of stigma associated with returnees from Europe who have been engaged in sex work. The study ignored other categories of returnees, who go back home to retire as 'madams' after a 'successful' sojourn. This dynamic surely affects the perception of Edo people to such returnees. Drawing from the substance of previous literature that accounts for the self sufficiency of the network to recreate itself, Carling (2006) posits that 'madams' were once victims themselves who have successfully repaid their debt and went on to acquire girls of their own.

In another vein, Alobo and Ndifon (2014) outline some theories of sex work, beginning from the functionalist theory, which suggests that sexual morality encourages sex work by making a case for men who want to have "unattached sex" and who patronize sex workers to fulfil this desire. The research moves on to the social psychological theory, which views the desire to engage in sex work from the angle of social and psychological factors, i.e. parental neglect, child abuse, easy ways of making money, and pressure from peers to engage in the business. While feminists are of the opinion that society holds women responsible for the moral threat associated with sex work, it is the female sex worker who finds herself being arrested. On the issue of reactions to the phenomenon, Alobo and Ndifon (2014) again present different categories of responses. From the angle of religion, sex work is morally wrong as it neglects the principles laid down by the scriptures. For ethnic groups, however, sex work is unacceptable and can lead to stigmatization that also extends to the family. The study claims that for Muslims, this phenomenon has grave consequences, such as stoning to death. On the legality of the trade, the research observes that while there is no law against sex work in Nigeria, some communities regulate it in order to prevent the spread of diseases associated with it.

Oath Taking in Judicial Practice

To Kate Abiri (2014), an oath is a testament to speak the truth or a vow to do something. The implication of this in legal proceedings is for an individual to take a vow with reference to God or a god, and to remain truthful and not withhold any relevant information. An oath of office involves a public servant swearing to uphold the duties of the office. The wordings of the oaths are sacred therefore making it too important or respected to be changed; it compels the oath taker to be faithful to its words and true to its conditions. The conditions of the oath are meant to be upheld by all religions and anyone who takes an oath should regularly remember what was sworn, especially when the option to default is introduced. As the taking of judicial oaths qualifies a person to be a judicial officer, no such officer can perform the functions of the office in question without swearing an oath.

The article by Van Dijk (2001) focuses on the fear and moral panic resulting from the involvement of African juju/voodoo in child prostitution rings in Dutch society. This led to a wave of actions that had serious implications for the receiving community, in this case the Netherlands and, moreover, the girls were criminalized as the state became forced to recalibrate existing policies on multiculturalism, which led to serious implication for control and inspection.

Van Dijk's research is particularly fascinating as it finds expression not only in the exotic but on the feelings of mutuality between the police officers who handled the cases (as an extension of the state) and the girls who had been under the voodoo hold, thereby creating a level ground for commonality and involvement that goes against the uncompromising nature of the West's 'state-orchestrated' character. The disappearance of Nigerian girls placed in foster care, who are between the ages of 10-20, became an issue as the cases began to run into the hundreds and the Dutch authorities had no clue about how to understand the emerging phenomenon. Initially, there was little alarm, although it provoked police investigation. At a certain point, a link to child prostitution was made by a number of social services and a struggle was revealed within the prostitution network comprising Ghanaians and other French-speaking West Africans and Nigerians. The Nigerian girls appeared to be younger, obviously more virile, and were prepared to get the job done at cheaper rates than was the norm.

A public outcry ensued regarding the violence these groups of underage Nigerian girls were exposed to as a result of the tensions between sex workers

of different nationalities. Episodes of anxiety and fear that manifested in young Nigerians girls fitting when they were called in by the police for questioning gave rise to series of investigations about, among other issues, the practice of voodoo in the network. This became evident when the Nigerian girls in custody began to request their 'packets', which, when opened, contained specific items ranging from body parts and metal to kola nuts and personal cosmetics. These items had elements of voodoo and were a representation of the rituals the girls had been exposed to back home in Nigeria and, of course, the fear and anxiety exhibited by the girls. The Dutch authorities came to the conclusion that the girls were forced to remain in the network as a result of the threats posed to them if they decided to do otherwise. This also inspired the girls to rely on their madams and the job carved out for them by these pimps. The efficacy of the juju also became a question for interrogation as the girls preferred to get the job done on the streets rather than seek solace in the comfort of the foster homes that the state was willing to offer. A revelation came when it became clear that certain rituals had been performed back home before and on arrival to ensure that the girls:

(a) Repaid debts of $US 25,000 or more
(b) are kept in check throughout the repayment period

The sensational media coverage of this issue and the inadequate police response appeared to put the society in a state of disarray. Van Dijk (2001) argues that the state response to the ensuing moral panic resulted in the issue and the police inquiries into the phenomenon becoming a top priority, in order to extricate the girls from the manipulative network. He suggests that this is the result of a cultural interface, specifically the fusion of the imaginations of the police officers who came into contact with such intriguing practices of the exotic.

However, the girls' exposure to violence and excessive coercion through the use of voodoo became pronounced, for instance, on arrival in Europe. It is at this point that the madams resort to the dramatic use of voodoo to elicit compliance. Van Dijk's (2001) research does not focus on the pressure on the pimps and madams to meet the demands of overseeing such a network, hence their dependence on the use of juju. Rather, the commercial interest of the operation is highlighted as a motivating factor for the recurrent use of juju in the receiving country.

Concept of Transnationalism

Vertovec (1999) conceives the notion of transnationalism by illustrating different categories beginning from the conceptualization of the term adopted by sociologists to imply a multiplicity of connections beyond territorial jurisdictions. It also refers to the creation of a number of distinct communities that encapsulate the notion of the diaspora as an embodiment of dispersal from either a pre-historic or an imagined homeland. The host community in this sense refers to the place of residence in contrast to a real or imagined homeland that maintains a 'romanticized' history of the place where the migration began. There is a presupposition of activities of networks straddling multiple spatial ranges and simultaneously impacting relationships in its wake. It is inclusive of breaking the barriers of locality to suggest that there are far more 'global interactions', spanning the restrictions that borders, identity, and nationalism create, involved in finding a common ground. From this standpoint, the historic migrant groups begin to renegotiate their realities into formations that are of a more or less social structure that can encourage diverse operations by both legal or criminal networks, which may involve trading in arms or the sale and resale of humans who have become commoditized items ready to be pawned off to the highest bidder (Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017). Cohen's (1997) representation in 'Global Diasporas' perhaps captures Vertovec's (1999) discussion of the "feeling of inbetweeness" that these migrants must come to terms with as they strive to maintain ties with the historic homeland and at the same time negotiate a balance in the receiving community. In doing so, a feeling of collective memory, nostalgia, desire, and consciousness work together to create an awareness that refuses to be rigid, but rather serves as a potpourri of identities, flexible enough to produce a "multiplicity of histories" (Ibid.). This idea of transnationalism transcends social constructions to include flows and mergers of religion. A vivid example here is, i.e. being bilingual, or more particularly the practice of multiple traditions. The expression of multiple cultures becomes visible in the everyday representation of life through a performance of style, behaviour, and other forms of cultural expressions such as music, folklore, dance and so on. With the younger generation as the pathfinders, they expand the frontiers of these flows as a result of multiple expressions to which they have been exposed. They become experts at a fusion of different styles and practices painstakingly mixed from a variety of customs. The result is a distinct creation that is influenced by flows and counter-flows of universal exchanges. These exchanges find daily expression in electronic media, which create a sense of contestation between the present disposition and the past heritage; the use of social media and the internet underscores this point. On one the hand, there

have been major advances in the accessibility of television channels since the emergence of satellite and cable, which further demonstrate the expansion of the frontiers of viewing to accommodate audiences of diverse backgrounds in a way that viewers become active participants in the projection of a preferred lifestyle. On the other hand, transnationalism, as Vertovec illustrates, captures businesses and institutions that span a universal network of individuals, which, according to Skair (cited in Vertovec, 1999:8) "constitutes power elite which interests are global […]." The transnational elite have managed to remain relevant in the face of a growth of informal networks in the transnational spheres that, in one way or another, identify with the homeland through returns, not necessarily physical, but through remittances (see Odorige 2016) to mediate development. The case of Nigeria is striking in Africa as the World Bank estimates a flow of $22 billion into the country (World bank Migration and Development Brief 2017), accounting for over five per cent of Nigeria's GDP. As the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) reports, in recent decades, remittances to and within the African continent have grown considerably, by 36 per cent, with Nigeria at the top, followed by a couple of Northern African countries, notably, Egypt and Morocco. The implications of these flows are multiple; they are expressed in terms of familial progress and, at the other end, national treasury. The recognition of the role of this migrant population in development translates into a phase of reintegration into the affairs of the homeland; a vivid example is the Kenyan situation where a diaspora policy was developed after the African Union recognized the diaspora as the sixth region of Africa (Kinuthia et al. 2017). These kinds of flows, Vertovec opines, are not only linear but represent secular flows that encapsulate the sending and receiving of information, activities, and practices that cut across friendships and family relationships to describe a wide variety of actors. Another dimension to the discourse on transnationalism finds expression, according to Vertovec (1999), in a framework that sets its sights on the mobilization of people through the media. This has informed engagement in different aspects of life, for example, the creation of e-groups on social media. A notable example is Female in Nigeria, a group that cuts across social class, religious orientation, and ethnic difference to create a platform for dialogue and the exchange of ideas among women who are in different geographical spaces but who share a common country. Such internet groups promote public participation and sensitization on a wide variety of issues. The transfer and redistribution of resources create what Vertovec (1999) terms, "safe havens abroad for activities which might be considered illegal or dangerous in the home context."

Another category comprises the praxis of diaspora involvement in a number of causes that border on civic engagement and social justice; an example is Amnesty International. These grants migrant groups the agency to impact on other linkages that interrogate the notions of territory and nationalism but which seek to create an avenue for dialogue and relationships between the homeland and the diaspora. The groups assume agency through a number of activities that, previously, were the exclusive preserve of residents in the homeland. Instances of such activities include voting rights – diaspora voting has become a keen subject of deliberation and recently some African countries have begun to embrace the issue.

The construction of space has also been heavily influenced by the calibration of transnationalism, producing a sense of balance that gives rise to connections in different territories. It facilitates formation of a community comprising special and virtual groups merged to produce so-called translocalities, in other words, a transnational locality that is characterized by the outer and inner (Vertovec 1999).

In Ato Quayson and Girish Darswani's conceptualization of transnationalism, the term designates the mobilization of emotions in cultural symbols, traditional habits, and types of diet as well as the sale of specific products recognized by a group as symbolic of their identity. An instance is the yam flour 'Amala' typical of the Yoruba people of Nigeria. The assumption therefore is to package an item in such a way that it represents the cultural sentiments of that group; the reflection of their everyday realities, lifestyle, and tradition in the economic product. From another dimension, the term not only refers to mobility, but also to connections between mobile or stable groups that share a common ground such as technology, citizenship, or a universal demand. The study posits that these groups are not necessarily derived from common ethnic or national identifications, but rather from "elective modes of identification involving class, sexuality and professional interest" (Quayson and Darswani 2013:4). This implies that there can be, for example, a transnational movement of doctors – "doctors beyond borders" – with the common goal of helping the sick, producing a community of medical practitioners bound by their common professional interest, or a community of academics coming together to teach for free in impoverished societies. These kinds of groups transcend co-ethnic identifications but preserve themselves by sharing a mutual objective. Quite notable is the understanding that this nature of ties gives agency to forms of human relationships that are developed through interactions such as social class, religious orientation, sexuality, sexual orientation, etc. Scholarly research into the transnational

involves moving beyond the national to include a variety of social relations across temporal and spatial levels. At this point, Quayson and Daswani (2013) argue that while the Jewish diaspora illustrates, to a large extent, the historical starting point of being away from home, it is actually a movement of groups in historic times that may broaden our comprehension of the term.

These periods, beginning from the late fifteenth century, became replete with the movement of human populations across different territories, some as slavers and others as slaves; on the other hand, some voluntary dispersal to improve economic conditions were also ongoing. The Renaissance, in the wake of the seventeenth century, also sought to bring the world closer by trying to establish Western civilization in different colonies. This speaks also to the ongoing dispersal of groups from the Global South to the Global North in contemporary times in search of more economic opportunities or protection from conflicts.

Another interesting dimension to the discourse on transnationalism as articulated by Quayson and Darswani is the issue of media materials, embodiment of the arts, and the representation of lifestyles adopted by dispersed groups. Their stories, folklore, and music are oral representations of the 'homeland' that eased the burden of the trauma associated with dispersal. On another level, materials and symbols become a reminder to these dispersed groups of the aura that homeland carries.

The study also traces the historic beginning of the use of transnationalism as way to "criticize classical frameworks within international migration," Citing Boune, Quayson and Daswani employed the term to address the way in which migrants keep in touch with the socio-cultural events in their countries of origin. It was also indentified in the '70s in the areas of foreign and international relations (Nye 1976 cited in Quayson and Darswani 2013). In the early '90s, the term then came to be associated with interdisciplinary engagements, cutting across different scholarly fields that serve as a way of advancing interpersonal relations across space. Notable among other issues is the role of sending countries have become more flexible to accommodate the straddling of multiple citizenships, to encourage the flow of manpower as well as capital, thereby transforming their economic situations. Citizens, therefore, become a constellation of the legal and cultural flows that these ties allow. The links are further strengthened by technological advancements that have compressed the universal shores into a single community where multiple relationships can thrive.

Baubock and Faist's (2010) concept of transnationalism is rendered to mean migrants' connections and/or flows. It depicts every aspect of social links, including active cross-border networks, communities, and companies. Pioneer usage suggests a way of bringing "home closer" (Glick Schiller year?; Basch and Szanton-Blanc 1995, in Baubock and Faist 2010). Quite different from multinational corporations and political parties who had previously been at the forefront of research into transnationalism, the ideology has focused on prioritizing the incorporation of immigrant diaspora as a paired term with transnationalism. It has come to mean a broad categorization of the historic and contemporary dispersal of particular groups, from the Jews and Americans and later expanding its application to accommodate other minority groups.

The conceptualization of transnationalism and transnational configuration addresses operations that move beyond borders and therefore depict abstract concepts. This means that transnational spaces imply durable and firm links and relationships reaching across territories of countries and co-ethnic identities. It also embodies "[…] positions within networks and organizations and networks of organizations that cut across the borders of at least two national states" (Faist 2000 in Baubock and Faist 2010:22). It began as a way of distinguishing between transnational corporations and their ties between nations and basic activities of people who move beyond or across borders. From this perspective, the concept draws inspiration from the tenets of international relations, but with an approach that is not state-oriented, but rather geared towards individual actors. In this way, these individuals who are major actors become 'labelled' as migrants. The concept moves on to accommodate organizations, associations as well as communities in a structure built on the basis of the sending countries, receiving nations, and, in some cases, varying destination countries as a result of onward migration. In order to fully come to terms with its ramifications, the concept of transnationalism emphasizes connections, links, and ties that occur between social spaces, reaching far beyond the restrictions of territorial boundaries. It speaks to a kind of 'deterritorialization' of social and cultural ideas. The idea therefore "encompasses all kinds of social phenomena […]", for example, the activity of INGOs that bring people together for a common goal, to the ties across borders that migrants keep, especially of 'being from here and going there', constantly linking themselves with a multiplicity of activities.

Transnationalism is an elastic term and deals with deterritorialized ties that include source, destinations, and connections from one side to the other. Research into transnationalism focuses on the question of interrogation and

absorption into a 'new' environment. It involves transnational practices that suggest a sort of unity that strives in its approach to community to avoid kinship ties, but rather to focus on "social proximity" (Faist 2000 in Baubock and Faist 2010).

It involves a broader understanding of social formation and connections as well as social movements. On the issue of its relationship with identity and mobility, transnationalism essentially targets movements beyond and across borders with a specific emphasis on networks and flows linking up at some point. The dynamics of temporality in the discourse on transnationalism is quite consequential. Transnationalism therefore embraces agency and operations within universal structures. It becomes a crucial way of interrogating other terms, for example, "community, social space and boundaries."

A great number of scholarly materials have explored the issue of sex trafficking, (Aghatise, 2004), the sex-work network (UNESCO 2006; Prina 2003; Carling 2004; Plambech 2014; EASO 2015), and human trafficking (Europol 2001; Nwogu 2006; Mojeed, 2008; Nagle 2015). Some recent studies have linked the human trafficking network in Nigeria to voodoo (Van Dijk 2001; Garcia 2003), but the majority of these works have treated the secrecy exhibited by trafficked persons in passing (UN 2006).

This study aims therefore to interrogate the oath-taking ritual, the wordings of oaths, and the ambience of fear it exudes, in order to explain how the oaths taken in Nigeria become an intangible aspect of the trafficking process, one designed to ensure the compliance of sex workers throughout the repayment period in the European destination. To do this, the study employs the theory of "abstract phenomena" in transnationalism in an attempt to understand the connections and flows that are obtained in the network and how they translate into its sustenance.

Theoretical framework

2.2 Theory of Abstract Phenomena in Transnationalism

The conceptualization of transnationalism as a field in the social sciences seeks to underscore the flows and ties that connect people across space and beyond borders (Vertovec 1999). The term is also employed to imply flows and counter-flows of people, historically and in contemporary situations (see

Quayson and Daswani, 2013). It goes beyond the dimensions of diaspora to encapsulate a broader understanding of both historic and more recent dispersal of people, from the Jews and Armenians, expanding to minority groups in contemporary Europe, while addressing other dimensions of operations among these groups.

At another level, as Vertovec (1999) asserts, transnationalism as a concept transcends areas that relate to social constructions to include other ideas that, in a way, create a hybrid that has become a basic feature of the world that we live in. In religion, concepts such as syncretism come to mind; in language, a multilingual approach is conceived that allows for the expression of diverse strands of a particular phenomenon. The idea manifests in the area of citizenship and identity politics, in which case countries have become receptive to the idea of dual/multiple nationalities allowing for an individual to have access to the provisions of more than one state.

As a product of the reality of globalization in the twenty-first century, transnationalism seeks explanation for how humans connect and link up as members of a community or as a group that shares a common goal. These communities are thus tied together, resisting any geographic or temporal barriers due to advancements in technology that give rise to communication networks that can sustain relationships between people from one end of the earth to the other. The key lesson here is that, for these ties that have been created as a result of transnational networks and that are sustained by communication flows, the idea of a "transnationalism of silence" goes a step further to illustrate how the concept relies on both tangible qualities and fluid connections. In this case, an abstract quality that seeks to connect individuals in an existing community, reaching beyond territorial boundaries to reveal a network of sophisticated operations that is influenced by flows and counter-flows.

Ordinarily, transnationalism suggests the physical movement of people, which means that, in a sense, it is about 'body politics' across spaces. But it is also about how 'abstract phenomena' like, in this case, an oath taken before leaving home, inform the pattern of life, work, and exploitation of sex workers in Edo State. It goes beyond seeking an explanation for the intangibility/fluidity of the phenomena that is invisible to others in the context of the trade but which actually informs its sustenance, even when it is to the detriment of the women concerned. This theory goes back to how transnationalism coexists with many other phenomena. It seeks to illustrate the flow of intangible phenomena, for example, the fluidity with which

gender concepts and categories have flown into spaces where certain sexual "practices hitherto without negative nomenclature" were not stigmatized as such until they were stereotyped through 'naming' as being different from the heterosexual norm. An analysis of the 'anti-gay' legislation in Uganda and Nigeria reveals how abstract terms have moved from elsewhere into Africa and have contributed to the criminalization of what was never in the criminal code and traces of its practise in prehistoric traditions are evident.

On a more specific level, the theory of abstract phenomena references the fluid movement and ties that link qualities that are not palpable, yet which inform people's actions and inactions as members of society. These abstract qualities encapsulate a wide variety of concepts, from cultural practices, to belief systems, to sickness and diseases, and all other forms of human expression. In this research, centrality is given to the abstract phenomenon of silence with respect to its application in the everyday experience of transnational sex work among Edo women.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the method employed in carrying out the study. It is divided into subsections comprising the research design, research population, study area, study population, sample size, procedure adopted for the study, data analyses procedure, and, finally, ethical consideration.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive examination of oath taking and how it translates into silence upon the mobility of the sex workers. Data was gathered from returnees from Europe over a period of five calendar months. According to Huysamen (1993), the design of a research plan is the blueprint for the information that will be collected to test the research hypothesis. In this chapter, this blueprint is described in terms of the goals of the research, the research outline, purposive sampling, instruments and techniques used, and, finally, the analyses of acquired data.

3.3 Study area

The study area is Benin City, which is the capital of Edo State in southern Nigeria. Benin City is the largest city in Edo State and, according to Ikeora (2016), a large percentage of women trafficked for sex work in Europe come from Benin City. The town is regarded as a city of ancient civilization and the birthplace of the Benin Empire, which reached its peak in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries before the balkanization of African civilizations that culminated in the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The cultures of the Benin people have been passed on from generation to generation and some of these traditional customs are still practised today. The Oba of Benin is regarded as the spiritual and political leader of the Benin people. The position/institution is passed on from ancient practice. Although

the emergence of modern-day democracy has stripped the monarch of the political baton of leadership, the Oba of Benin is still a revered king among the Edo people and he still presides over customary issues.

The culture of the Benin people is deeply embedded in traditional religion and its practice. This is a major reason why oath taking for trafficking purposes found fertile ground in the state.

The fact that returnees who have been deported from Italy naturally return to their homeland and original place of residence, makes Benin City a suitable choice for this study. Coupled with the above is the reality of the traditional atmosphere in Benin, which accommodates the practice of traditional religion to a large extent. The availability of these traditional centres of worship where oath taking rituals are conducted makes Benin City a suitable location for the sex work network.

3.4 Study population

The population of this study consists of female returnee sex workers, juju priests, NAPTIP agents, traditional rulers, trolleys, and heads of charity organizations for returnees in Benin City.

3.5 Sampling techniques and sampling procedure

For this study, the probability sampling technique was adopted. The purposive sampling technique was utilized in the selection of respondents. This is because the study required competent and reliable key informants who were able to provide adequate and concise information useful for the actualization of the research goal.

3.6 Sample size

The sample size consists of: 22 female returnees from Europe, the majority of whom had returned from Italy; two juju priests who conduct oath taking rituals for sex work; six NAPTIP field agents including the zonal commander of Edo/Delta zone; two trolleys; and three heads of charity organization for returnees in Benin City.

3.7 Method of data collection

For the purpose of this research, the qualitative method of data collection was adopted. As McMillan and Schumacher (2001) note, qualitative techniques are used to collect data primarily in the form of words, rather than numbers. This research made use of informal, in-depth interviews and observation.

In-depth interviews were held with returnee sex workers, NAPTIP agents, juju priests, and heads of charity organizations in Benin, while observations were carried out in Ayelala temples. The interviews were structured to capture the research questions thereby realizing the objectives of the study. The interviews comprised open-ended questions that aimed to encourage the participants to talk in detail about their experiences. Towards the completion of the study, the researcher decided to observe the daily lives of the returnees through participant observation and daily visits to their places of business were made.

The observation of Ayelala temples was carried out in the course of the research. Impromptu visits to observation sites were carried out. The observation of these temples became important in order to compare the practice as it is performed in the temples with the testimonies of respondents.

3.8 Method of data analysis

A number of strategies were employed during interviews, these included engaging the key informants in discussions related to other returnees and sharing experiences to get the discussion running. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Notes were also taken by the researcher during the interview sessions.

3.9 Limitations of the study

The Benin interviews for this project consist of women/girls who had returned from Italy either voluntarily or through the deportation process. They were all trafficked for sex work at some point without full details of the nature of the 'job'. The reality of their return after failure in Italy has impacted their lives in one way or another. They have to deal with the stigma associated with sex work and also the trauma of their experiences of the 'Libyan route', the route that majority of the women passed through. Getting them to

recount and relive their experiences, especially the oath taking process, was a challenge at first. I therefore decided to become a participant in their daily activities. The aim was to make me, the researcher, a part of their reality in order to gain their trust and confidence. This participant observation method allowed me to blend into their lifestyle and also encouraged the returnees to open up in the interviews.

The code words and slang used by the returnees proved to be a major issue. For a better understanding of their narratives, I had to employ the service of a returnee to explain in detail the meaning of such slang. Other actors who were part of the network and were interviewed for the study were also initially reluctant to divulge information to me. However, after a series of attendances at the ritual process and meetings, they became more relaxed and were willing to respond to my questions.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

The objectives and focus of the research were guided. Ethical consideration was ensured and the protection and integrity of participants were guaranteed. This was done by adopting pseudonyms when and where necessary to ensure the privacy of participants. The welfare of participants during the course of the research was also prioritized; anonymity rights and requests were also upheld.

4 Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This study offers a discussion on the dimensions of oath taking for sex work, the rituals involved in the process, the sex work network and its operations in Edo State. The oath taking itself becomes central to the sex work network. Related to this is the significance of the ritual to the network and how silence is displayed in a plethora of ways. The research explores the dynamics of the use of juju in the sustenance of sex work in Edo State, taking into consideration the network involved, the belief system of sex workers, the connection between parties involved, and the transnational dimensions of the operation. Furthermore, attention is paid to how the 'oath taking' aids transnational sex work thereby giving insight into the calibration of the transnationalism of silence of Edo transnational sex work and how it is implicated in their activities. The chapter also provides the perception(s) of Edo people towards sex work, from the perspective of the sex workers and other agents represented in the state. In order to understand various perspectives of the discourse, the views of the following groups are considered germane to the production of findings:

- Traditional rulers
- Law enforcement agents
- Sex workers
- Parents/Guardian of sex workers)
- Traditional priest
- Religious leaders

Equally important are the processes involved in the oath taking rituals and how they ensure the silence of Edo transnational sex workers. The processes sustain beliefs about the perceived consequences of oath default. To that extent, they offer an explanation for how the consequences sustain Edo transnational sex work while perpetuating their exploitation.

4.2 The Madam

According to Europol (2011), there has been an increase in the number of traffickers over the years. This means that the traffickers have devised innovative methods of trafficking victims across the borders to Europe. Ikeora (2016) explains that sex work networks in Edo State vary in their mode of operation, but that the structure is, in most cases, quite constant. These variations are dependent on a number of factors, for example, the number of women and girls to be recruited. The Madam heads the network; she finances the operation and gives orders on the next line of action.

In this vein, Carling (2005) opines that madams are usually former victims of the sex trafficking network who have, in turn, gained freedom from their former madams. They subsequently decide to set up their own network, serving as madams to new sets of victims. These facts underscore their expertise in recruiting new victims into the network. Although the process of recruitment and transportation of women and girls to Italy is regarded as clandestine (see Attoh 2007), the madam sends out the word that 'she is recruiting' girls. She calls on friends, relatives, former colleagues, and former acquaintances made during the course of her own trafficking as well as church members in some cases. One of the respondents, who went to Italy but was recruited via the pastor of her church, recollected that:

> I was a chorister in the church everyone usually told me they liked my voice and whenever I sang, the spirit came down. It was one of my singing days that Brother Valentine told me that pastors would like to see me. The pastors told me that I was very talented and that they would help me develop my talent; they convinced me that I would make it in Europe big time as a musician, if I could make good music like I did in the church. I was very excited and was ready to go through with the processes.

The madam's signal here underscores the chain of communication as it plays out in a transnational network (Vertovec 1999). Although not physically present in Benin City or Edo State, the madam is able to coordinate the activities of the network through the help of the 'pastors' from another space without any form of restriction. This is in line with the principle of transnational networks that seek to find a common, 'criminal' ground from which to operate.

Further findings revealed that the pastor of the church already knew the nature of the job and how the whole recruitment was to be done, having prior knowledge that the girl would be taken to the temple for oath taking. Notwithstanding this understanding, he still chose to conspire with the traffickers using his spiritual position to lure church members into the traffickers' network. The respondent has this to say:

> The pastor is a close friend to the madam that recruited me. I was introduced to a man of God who headed a spiritual church he had a sister who lived in France and operates a sex work network. The pastor told me point blank that he would take me to place where I would get 'fortified' for the job ahead, it was during the fortification that I swore to payback fifty thousand Euros to my madam and to always obey her.

The research identified other techniques and strategies devised by the head of the network in the recruitment of potential sex workers. Sometimes this is done by stories she spins about herself or by the agents she employs to recruit these girls (see EASO 2015). It should be noted that the madam was a one-time sex worker. She also has to be a step ahead of authorities, according to Ikeora (2016), in her bid to ensure that the new recruits reach their European destination As a consequence of anti-trafficking moves, some madams now avoid directly running the affairs of the network (see Mancuso 2014), while others have maintained their position as the central point of the operation (Siegel and De Blanc 2010; Prina 2003; Carchedi and Tola 2008). The research was able to reveal, among other things, the different roles played by the madam in the recruitment process. These are discussed in the next section of this chapter.

Active Involvement in the Recruitment Process

For some madams, directly handpicking the potential sex worker is a priority. This demands, more often than not, their presence in Benin City and the help of others might be required in the process. In all cases, they make sure to view the girls before the recruitment process is over. This could be done by having a friend or relative introduce her to the potential sex worker. As Kienast et al. (2014: 9) suggest, it is quite easy for women to approach potential victims as they have "easier access to other women [...]." One of the respondents confirmed that:

> I had a customer who usually came to make her hair in my salon. I was always happy to see her because she always tipped me generously and there were sure to be lots of things to talk about whenever she's around. One day she came and offered making me her desired hairstyle, she asked me if I would be interested in going abroad to make hair in her sister's shop. Since I was very good, I was very happy and I told her that it was a welcome idea. After some arrangements, she told me she was going to introduce me to her sister, who I would be working for abroad. This was the first time I met the woman who would later become my madam.

This raises the questions, why would the madam need others to introduce her to the girls or why should there be an introduction in the first instance, and why does the madam herself not approach the potential sex worker, introduce herself, and make her intentions known? These submissions speak to the focus of the EASO report (2015), which engages the idea that the madam's contract agents have either a familial relationship with or friendship ties to the potential victim. The success of the operation is perhaps hinged on the notion that the society generally perceives women to possess a sensitive nature that characteristically exudes greater innocence than criminality. This perception makes women a trustworthy group in society, perhaps incapable of involvement in criminal activities. Kienast et al., (2014) while drawing from Siegal and De Blanc, note that women are increasingly playing a role in the trafficking network as pimps, priestesses of temples, and matriarchs who sponsor these operations.

Non-Active Involvement of Madams in the Recruitment Process

Other categories of madams do not participate directly in the recruitment process. They make arrangements for the recruitment, transportation, and delivery of the sex workers to specific destinations in Europe. These madams employ other agents to run the operations but are able to "influence all phases of the crime by acting as organizers of, and focal points for, the entire trafficking process" (Mancuso 2014: 3). They are central to the sustenance of an active transnational criminal network that resonates beyond spatial enclaves and produces a vibrant community that recreates itself (Carling 2005). Over the years, the madams have withstood and subverted the demands and pressure posed by anti-trafficking groups.

This category of madam is more flexible and has created a 'successful cliché' for themselves that paints a picture of affluence and integrity in the minds

of the potential sex worker; thus, the potential victims are convinced of the credibility of the 'story' of a potential position or job in Europe. To maintain this cliché, the madams therefore rely on existing networks in Benin to oversee operations such as visiting the temples for the oath taking ritual, which may otherwise dent the exquisite image of success these categories of madams have tried to portray.

> A neighbour of mine introduced me to a man that promised to take us to Italy. He arranged for our document to be processed and convinced us to take an oath. He said we were going to work for his sister, whom he made sure we spoke to at intervals. It was when I got to Italy that I realized that the man's sister who I had been speaking with on phone was my madam and she had employed her brother to organize the travelling process and oath taking

Recruitment techniques

Trust: The process is in most cases secretive; therefore, the madam and her 'recruitment team' have to manipulate the girls by capitalizing on existing relationships and by studying the victims in order to exploit their vulnerability. If the potential worker has no relationship with the 'client' who introduced her to the madam, there is no foundation of trust to build on. This trust becomes a key factor in the recruitment process as a good percentage of trafficked victims are introduced to the network by people they have a pre-existing relationship with. Perhaps a more interesting dimension to this is captured in Kienast et al.'s (2014) explanation that there is a dominant societal stereotype whereby women are not associated with notions of criminality, as discussed earlier. At another level, the technique employed by the network to create a level of dependence on the madam, who represents an ideal image of a 'helper' or 'mother' goes a long way to win the trust of unsuspecting girls and their families (Carling, 2005; Van Dijk, 2001; EASO 2015).

Display of Wealth: This is a key factor in the recruitment process of sex workers and 'the display of wealth' works in two ways:

i. Some madams flaunt their wealth at girls who have prior knowledge of the nature of the 'job' they are to engage in on arrival in Italy. This serves the purpose of making 'new recruits' realize how wealthy they can become if they succeed in the chosen endeavour (see Kienast et al. 2014; Siegal de Blanc 2010; Iocono 2014). This impression is also maintained by

an active network of the madams, especially on social media platforms where parties and celebrations are regularly displayed in order to sustain this image of affluence. This fosters ideas and notions that travel makes connections between people, even those of different ethnic nationalities, possible. This much is evidenced in the introduction to Faist and Baubock (2010) on the scope and prospects of transnationalism. Another dimension to the discourse finds expression in a framework that sets its sight on the mobilization of people through the print and mass media (including social media). In this regard, the reach is wider (Vertovec 1999) and the aim is to create a sense of accomplishment in order to attract others to the affluent lifestyle.

ii. For those naïve girls who are deceived into thinking that their Italian sojourn will entail making a honest living using the skills they have, the display of affluence by their madam is read as the madam being capable of owning establishments in the desired destination that, in turn, require their service, hence the demand for girls like them.

A respondent shared her testimony on how she was tricked by a madam's wealth display:

> My mother has a friend in her society group but she stays in Italy. She's very rich and highly respected among the women and she comes around every time the club invites her and she spends a lot of money and she donates a lot of money at the club launching every time. I was told that she was poor before she found her way to Italy few years ago, that all her wealth came from different businesses she engaged in when she got to Italy.

The respondent revealed that her madam was a prominent woman in their area and she was very rich and influential. For this sex worker, society's perception of the madam's 'success' certainly influenced her decision to join the network, which, as Adorige (2016) posits, is sustained through remittances geared towards effecting development back home but that is silent on the associated stigma once the venture becomes truncated either by deportation or disease.

Naïvety as a Tool for Enlisting Potential Sex Workers

Naïvety goes a long way in the recruitment process. It capitalizes on the inexperience of the victims while deceiving them into believing that life in Europe is easy. They create a picture that depicts legal job opportunities and

money-making businesses. The sex workers at this point do not understand the European system and what the new society has to offer. Despite this, they are forced to swear an oath to pay back a huge amount of money.

One respondent explained:

> I was about 15 years old and I was approached and convinced to go abroad. I did not really have any idea what I was going to do there, all I knew was that I was taken to a temple and there I took an oath with several other girls that I was going to pay back the sum of 35,000 euros to my madam for her effort in taking me to Europe. When I was swearing the oath, I had no idea what the amount meant, it was on my arrival in Verona and at the start of work that I was informed of the job description and then later realized that the amount I had sworn to payback was very huge and it would take a long time for me to pay up.

Another respondent corroborated this testimony:

> I was an apprentice seamstress in [the] upper area of Benin. My boss's younger sister informed me of the 'connection'. I did not meet my madam physically, we only communicated through the phone. She assured me that I would be engaged in the business of making clothes for her numerous customers. I signalled my interest and I was then asked to contact a guy who I later knew was a 'trolley'. I was taken to Orhiomwhon after Ugoneki; there I was made to swear that I would obey my madam and also pay back the sum of 45,000 euros from my earnings. I felt that this money was going to be paid from my earnings as seamstress in Italy. I was shocked to later find out that I was recruited for sex work. This was after my arrival in Italy.

These young girls and many others are ignorant of the implication of the 'debt' that they are to pay back to the madam during oath taking; their naivety becomes an exploitable tool during the recruitment process. For Van Dijk (2001), Kienast et al. (2014), and Pascoal (2014), some of the trafficked girls are too young and inexperienced to understand the implications of the potential job to be taken up. In an effort to lure this 'inexperienced' category of girls into Italy, the network withholds information on the size of the debt (Landinfo 2006). The traffickers also deceive unsuspecting victims on the dimensions of the job (Carling 2005). In addition, the victims do not understand the value of the euro, especially in relation to Nigeria's naira (Baye 2014; Landinfo 2006), thus their ignorance becomes a tool in the hands of the networks' leaders. Such naïvety can be manipulated or exploited to suit

the desires of the madam and the network. Moreover, with the introduction of juju, the victims are trapped in a web of debt and lies (Garcia 2013).

Some madams maintain a certain level of anonymity by concealing their identity until the 'new recruits' are delivered to them. This corroborates Mancuso's (2014) view on the centrality of madams in the network. She offers an analysis of the madams, who, pointedly, are not involved in all the stages of trafficking. Instead, they use third parties and agents to facilitate the transfer of the 'new recruits'. These madams, according to Mancuso, rely on the network and connections to get the job done. The connections are tied together by one goal, as Vertovec (1999) aptly captures, "to move the girls down to the receiving Italian or European destination." The madams therefore become, in this sense, distinguished figures, utilizing different agents in the network, both local and international (UNICRI, 2010), to meet the demand for 'recruits'.

One of the respondents deported from Italy when she was barely 19 years old said:

> I did not really meet the madam throughout my entire stay in Italy. When we were making preparations for my trip it was a woman who lived close to our house that processed everything for us. When I got to Italy, I still did not meet the madam, although I spoke to her on phone and it was the woman she put in charge that I delivered my earnings to. I later learnt that my madam was in France all the while we were in Italy working for her.

The madam in this case wants to protect her identity and anonymity, but also tries to establish the fact that she is the overall head of the sex work operation, hence the periodic calls. It becomes difficult for the sex worker to help the authorities in tracking down the madam and this makes investigation and potential arrest of people involved a dead end for the police and other relevant authorities such as NAPTIP.

The discussion of the second category of madams by Mancuso (2014) suffices here. This category of madams is directly involved in the running of the network, or the recruitment of victims from Benin. They also rely on existing networks of traffickers in the destination or receiving country to get victims (UNODC 2011) and are involved in other logistics related to sourcing for 'clients'. From here, it can be observed that these migrant groups of madams in Italy have devised a means of renegotiating their existence into formations that are more or less in a social structure that fosters diverse illegal operations

(Vertovec 1999), in this case, the sale and resale of humans for the purpose of trafficking for sex work (Oyekanmi and Okunola 2017).

The Madam and the Oath

Findings revealed that the praxis of oath taking in Edo has peculiar dimensions in comparison to identified oath taking practice by past scholars. Similar to the "Medieval times in Europe, the art of entering into this contract is called doing homage" (Scott, 2009: 54 cited in Jegede 2011: 148).

In the course of the research, the study identified the similarities and differences in the oath taking practice in Edo and the medieval fealty oath. In terms of fealty oaths, a vassal pledges allegiance to the feudal lord; in return, the feudal lord pledges allegiance to the vassal. There is a major and minor in this type of oath and the interest of the major are to be served. The major expects certain duties from the minor; in turn, the minor has certain expectations of the major, thus each party in the oath promises certain things to the other and, if the contract is violated, then the fealty can be defied (Jegede 2011). The oath taking practice in Benin today is similar to the fealty oath but has its own peculiarities. The difference in the practice lies in the fact that the minor is the only participant in the process, while the madam is not bound to participate as she is merely an observer. In this practice, the madam's interests are to be served, as in the fealty. None of the respondents reported their madam swearing an oath to abide by the agreement they had reached, nor did they promise to abide by "[a] specified statement of duties" like the potential sex workers did.

All the returnees interviewed maintained that they swore to always obey the instructions of their madam. Does this therefore mean that the sex worker who has taken the oath is bound to the madam as a result of the statements made while swearing? While the madam, in turn, is free to do as a she wishes because she is not bound by anything? Here, the oath taking practice of Benin transnational sex work contrasts with the practice of fealty oaths. As stated above, both parties – lords and vassals – are involved in fealty oaths and both must adhere strictly to the provisions of the oath. Any party who breaks the promise is made to face the consequences.

A returnee respondent confirmed that:

> I paid my money judiciously to my madam on return from work every day. I had nearly completed the agreed amount, paying everyday while my madam recorded my payments in a designated notebook. Then [my madam] set me up with the police. I had less than one thousand euros left to pay and I had gone on a trip with a generous client. On getting down [sic] from the taxi that brought me home, the police were waiting for me; they handcuffed me and led me to their vehicle that took me straight to the deportation camp. I was not allowed to even carry my own belongings. On getting to Nigeria, I learnt that my madam was responsible for my arrest by tipping off the police of my whereabouts which led to my deportation.

According to respondents' interpretation of this incident, the madam referred to in the above testimony knew that the sex worker would shortly pay off her debt and thus become a threat to the operation of her network operation, since having paid her dues, the sex worker would no longer be bound to the madam. It was revealed that the oath that was taken by the sex worker was to comply with all directives from the madam. The madam is not obliged to abide by any regulation *vis-a-vis* this oath. This makes it easy to manipulate the authorities in her favour, thereby truncating the sex worker's stay in Italy. In this case, the madam is the sole beneficiary of her actions. This would enable her to recruit a fresh batch of sex workers that would dominate the streets without the interference of the experienced sex worker who would be competition for any new 'recruits'.

According to Europol (2011), most madams are themselves past victims of the same sex work network. This implies that they were minors in the network before they became majors and, at that point of becoming a madam, they emerged as threat to the previous madam by engaging clients from the older madam's client base. Carling (2005) also confirms that the system becomes a self-perpetuating organization. The implication of the oath-taking practice is that the contract is one sided and the madam can always terminate such contracts or request a renewal whenever she deems fit.

4.3 The Administrator as 'Trolley'

Carling (2005) opines that the 'trolley' is a key actor in the sex work network in Benin. Their duties include but are not limited to recruitment, delivery, and organization of the sex workers.

Trolleys can be male or female and are always available to perform their required duties. Findings reveal that trolleys are the brainchild of the recruitment process in Benin City. They identify and arrange meetings with potential sex workers and also organize the trip, oversee the oath-taking ritual, and accompany the new 'recruits' on the trip, which involves crossing territorial boundaries. The trolley wields considerable power in the network and is responsible for the success or failure of the operation. Domiciled in Benin, trolleys are usually handpicked by the madam, who will be aware of the person's reputation. In fact, in some cases the madam delegates her duties to the trolley, who then manages the entire operation, from recruitment to delivery of the sex workers, all the while reporting to the madam. This underscores the position taken in the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Report (2010), which states that "specialists abound that are saddled with the responsibility of administrative duties." They may or may not be directly involved in the network but their operations are closely connected in order to provide supplementary services to the network, i.e. obtaining forged documents from local experts, knowledge of the best routes to take, connections with immigration officers, and recruiting new victims. Whereas the madam is physically on the ground in Europe, the trolley is recruited to perform the specific functions that fall into his areas of expertise and responsibility, as discussed below.

Processing Travel Documents

The trolley contacts a network of individuals who have connections with authorities responsible for the procurement of travel documents, such as passports (UNODC 2010). The level of their connections cannot be ascertained at this point in the research, but one is left to question the integrity of government officials who prepare such documents without requiring an explanation for the recurring demand. In instances where the need for 'fake' documents arise, the trolley also has connections with specific network rings that can provide such paperwork.

A trolley respondent told me:

> Our work involves so many things; you can't call it a job. It's like using the connections we have to get what we want, I have 'eyes' in all government agencies that help to provide travel documents that the girls would need, sometimes if we can't get the one from the legal authority, we go for the fake travel documents that are very similar to the original. In fact, if you don't take a good look at it you won't differentiate it from the original document.

Identification and Organization of New Recruits

In charge of the most sensitive part of the operation, the trolley looks out for young, naïve girls who will suit their purpose. In doing so, they require the input of agents who feed them information about the girl or introduce them to potential candidates (Carling 2005; Cherti et al. 2013; Landinfo 2006). These agents are familiar persons, who are perceived to be trustworthy, usually peers, neighbours, and relatives. Cherti et al.'s research corroborates this finding. They revealed that 29 out of 40 women interviewed had been recruited by someone they or their family members were familiar with, while six women out of 40 were introduced to the network by their family members or a colleague. About seven women were recruited by a guardian or employer, nine of the interviewed women were introduced to the network by family friends or neighbours, while only eleven women in the study were recruited by total strangers. The role of the trolley in the network goes beyond recruitment; they also perform the duties of a travel guide and companion, tasked with delivering the potential sex worker, via Niger, Libya, or by air, to Europe. They also liaise with the madam in Italy and ensure that the potential sex workers cross the Mediterranean at a time when the tides are low, i.e. when crossings are easier and safer. In cases like this, one can deduce that the trolley takes on additional duties to ensure the safety of his passengers. This is good for his reputation and also furthers the cause of the network (Women's Link Worldwide 2015). One of the respondents affirmed that:

> A friend of mine introduced me to the man who was in charge of the processing of the trip. It was the trolley that helped me secure my international passport at a fee; he was also the one who took 'us' to the juju priest that conducted the oath. On the day we embarked on the trip, I learnt he was also the one that would take us through the desert. I later found out

> that he was a returnee from Libya who was very conversant with the 'route' we took.

The tasks of the kind of trolley described above not only include organizing and recruiting the girls for the trip, but also entail delivering them across the desert for a fee. This view resonates with the research conducted by Women's Link Worldwide, which depicts trolleys as 'guidemen', who use their previous travel experience to their advantage and make a living out of the booming trafficking industry (Plambech 2014). This study identified how the trolley secures his or her recruits and how he evades authorities such as NAPTIP in his or her illegal operations. One of the respondents explained:

> I got wind of the operation through a friend, we did our Ordinary National Diploma together; she and the 'trolley' were related. When my friend asked of my interest and I signified interest, she took me to him and then he began planning for me to join the 'trip'.

As the respondent's testimony reveals, the use of informal networks to 'spread the word' is quite advantageous to the trolley and they exploit them to make sure that family members, friends, etc. are aware of his trade. The trolley is also saddled with the responsibility of locating a 'powerful' priest to conduct the oath ritual. Once such a priest has been identified, the trolley must 'test' their powers and check their suitability for his demands. Kienast et al. (2014) observes that these administrators can be of any gender and, indeed, women who act as trolleys are very knowledgeable of the operations as they may, at one time, have been former sex workers themselves (Carling 2005).

A trolley respondent revealed that:

> In our work, we have to carefully select the 'juju' priest to use. Some priests are better when it comes to preparing 'protection' charms, which is also needed as not all the people we deliver across the desert are girls; some men who want to go to Europe for 'greener pastures' also seek our services. For this kind of job, we require a priest that has protection spell expertise; if I am to deliver girls to their madam who wants them to stay under 'control', I will get a priest who is renowned for his 'oath-taking' powers. In short, the make-up of my 'passengers' determines the kind of priest to use.

The study identified that the trolley keeps contact with different 'juju' priests as part of his job description to ensure the compliance of his passengers and a smooth journey. There are different types of trolleys: There are those who

are regarded as 'kings of the desert', because they have crossed successfully, guiding a lot of people; while others have a string of contacts with, for example, forgers, who help to secure documents for madams who are willing to pay more for the passage of their 'wards'.

Their jobs have become threatened with the presence of increasing numbers of returnees from Libya who also claim to have contacts along the route who can successfully take people across. The whole operation is a money-making venture and achieving success in any operation adds 'feathers' to a trolley's reputation, thereby building a client base.

From the above submission, it becomes apparent that although the trolley is an employee of the leader of the operation, he is more central to the success of the operation in most cases and only requires a 'financier', a role typically filled by the madam. Frequently, the trolley is the 'face' of the operation and madams who love to protect their anonymity prefer to employ the 'services' of a trolley from the beginning of the operation. For a madam who is still renegotiating her feeling of 'inbetweenness', in Vertovec's (1999) words, the ties she has maintained with the network back home in Nigeria become reliable enough to produce a trolley whenever the need arises, no matter how long she has been away from home.

4.4 The 'Juju' Priest

The juju priest is an individual (male or female) regarded as a spiritual leader, '*ohen*', or native doctor. Simoni (2013) observes that the priests act as sureties for the network, ensuring that the promise of the debt is secured. They also perform the function of 'fortifying' the whole operation. The role of the 'juju' priest in the sex work industry in Benin cannot be overemphasized. Statistics suggest that about 95 per cent of trafficked victims go through an oath-taking process, usually carried out in a shrine and conducted by a 'juju' priest (Ikeora 2016). The priest is not usually a direct employee of the leader (madam). His employment is contractual and his or her role is to oversee the ritual process and to handle all spiritual matters relating to the operation. This dual nature of the priest often confuses some victims, who generally believe in the efficacy of the protection service offered by the priest but also have to come to terms with the oaths taken. What ensues therefore is a psychological dependence

on the juju to serve as protection, which, in a sense, becomes a chain reaction of dependence. The spiritual affairs described take the following forms:

Conducting the Oath-Taking Ritual

The research study was able to identify the role of the juju priest in the sex work network. The role of the juju priest is primarily to conduct the oath-taking ritual (UNICRI 2010; Simoni 2014). In most cases, the juju priest is aware of the intentions of the madam through the trolley or directly from the madam. The communication link between the juju priest and madam is always intact as he might be needed from time to time to reinforce the efficacy of the oaths taken by the victims, especially in cases of uncooperative girls (Simoni 2013).

This study reveals that the juju priest collects a fee for every girl that is brought in to swear an oath. He prepares the shrine for the ritual and his justification mainly comes from the fact that the leader (madam) spends or intends to spend a lot of money ferrying the 'potential' sex worker across to Europe. To him, it is only fair that the sex workers work and pay back the agreed sum. The morality of the priest and his image as a messenger of the gods here on earth can be questioned at this point. While most traffickers have employed the use of Ayelala temples and priests (Ibid.), the justice Ayelala serves here does not hinge on whether the action the oath is needed for is good or bad; but rather, it is regarded as a means of demanding and receiving 'justice' in cases of default. At this point, the attention moves to those madams or traffickers who do not stick to their end of the promise. Do they also bear the consequences of default like the aforementioned medieval lords? As confirmed by Jegede (2011), the priest is usually the head of the proceedings in the shrine and has a 'direct' link to the gods. A respondent explained that:

> When I got to the shrine in the company of the trolley and several other girls, we met a man who was the juju priest of the shrine. He requested that we remove our footwear and clothes to begin the ritual.

Counsellor/Adviser

The priest also performs other functions apart from spiritual duties. He mediates whenever there is a dispute between the madam and the girl(s), or

the girl(s) and the trolley. The girls/madams also contact him periodically for advice and counsel. One of the respondents told me:

> On getting to Italy after the long trip in the desert, I was shocked at the kind of work my madam expected me to engage in. I cried and cried for days and then sought advice from the other girls. They advised me to stay-on and work as I was already there; but I was not convinced and so did not follow them out to work. My madam soon ran out of patience and decided to call the 'juju' priest who conducted the oath-taking ritual back home in Benin. My madam was very angry and told the priest to speak with me and try to convince me. He spoke with me, reminding me of the oaths I had taken and how his 'juju' can make me 'suffer' in life which he didn't want to happen. He asked if I was the only one in such predicament and told me to seek advice from the other girls on how to 'do' the work. He also mentioned that the 'juju' might decide not to affect me if I renege on the agreement of the oath but instead affect my mother.

From the above testimony, it is clear that the priest also serves as a 'surety' and 'counsellor'; they are a constant reminder of the oaths taken.

This role is likened to the idea depicted by Gifford (2004) in an attempt to capture the changing paradigms of Christianity in Ghana in the wake of political and economic instability. Africans find solace and hope in religion, while spiritual leaders prey on the inadequacies of the state, becoming 'life coaches' that members become extremely dependent on. In relation to the network, this dependency confers agency on the juju priests, who then operate from a position of authority over the madams and the victims. This also explains their relevance in the network; if any decision is to be taken, the opinion of the priest is highly esteemed. It should be noted that all these services are generally carried out for a fee.

Miscellaneous Duties

Research revealed that the 'juju' priest also performs other functions in the network. For example, they oversee the preparation of materials containing some form of magic. These so-called enhancers are prepared by special arrangement between the priest and the sex worker, or between the madam and the priest on behalf of the sex worker. The items of juju may be sent to the sex worker when she has already begun work in Italy.

Cleansing rituals are also conducted by the priests especially on girls who are said to have 'unclean' spirits. The cleansing aims to purify the individual and sever any links with these unclean spirits. As a priest confirmed:

> I also help them make juju that would help them along the journey and for some of the girls who are going to work as prostitutes. I prepare charms and amulets, which, if handed over to them at the point of oath-taking rituals, their parents or relatives package and send it across to them. Sometimes the girls are not fit to go by land, I call upon the gods to protect them. In that case, they have to go through a cleansing ritual where incisions are made on either their private parts or chest or arms, which helps to ward off evil spirits along the route and protect them from various forms of harm.

4.5 The Sex Worker

Plambech (2014) regards the sex worker as the 'nucleus' of the whole operation. The sex worker is recruited or initiates her own recruitment into the network. She may be recruited by the madam without adequate knowledge of the nature of the work; at other times, the sex worker may have consciously opted for the trade. She contributes to the smooth running of the system in the period she is involved in the network. Their innocence/naivety at the point of contact notwithstanding, the oaths taken play a significant role in binding her to the network and also aids her silence as a member of the network. Other factors are also responsible for her compliance, for example, the ultimate desire to make it in Europe.

To unravel how oath taking aids sex work, examining the sex worker as a concept and a phenomenon is necessary. The examination would include the state of mind of different categories of sex workers, their belief system, and the influence of family members and relatives on the decision to travel abroad.

Categories of Potential Sex Workers

- The Naïve

This study revealed that these categories of sex workers are usually very young, between twelve and nineteen years and, as such, are every trafficker's (madam's) delight and dream. They ask no questions and believe everything

they are told – hook, line, and sinker. Some of the sex workers are recruited from other villages and their knowledge of the outside world is minimal.

One of the respondents interviewed at New Benin market recounted her experience:

> I was barely fifteen years old when my guardian brought me to Benin City from my village in Orlu East in Imo State. I could hardly understand a word of Pidgin English, not to talk of the Benin dialect; I only did what I was told by my guardian, which was to go with the woman who would henceforth be my new guardian. The woman took me and a couple of other girls to a woman in a faraway village, there some animals were slaughtered and we were asked to eat the heart of the chicken, raw. The woman dressed as a priestess ordered me to recite some words which at that time I could not understand its meaning, I did and after a few days, we took a trip to another city where I and the other girls in the company of my 'new guardian' took a flight to Italy. I had lived and worked for my 'new guardian' for over two years before I found out I was meant to have a 'record' book to take stock of my cash deliveries, the sad truth is that it was only when the police raided and caught up with me and some other girls in my 'crew' that I found out that the city I had been living in was Florence.

The case of this young girl is just one of many who are taken away from the shores of Nigeria without realizing the implication of the journey. As Kienast et al. (2014) posits, the victims are completely deceived about the nature of the job in Italy. Owing to their lack of exposure and their naïvety, these victims enter into the trafficking situations without actually realising the implications (Long 2002). This category of sex worker needs no convincing; they are always willing to obey instructions. Where the prospective sex worker is sent via the land route, she embarks on the journey without questions. This strand of sex workers and their experiences, interrogates the assertion of Van Dijk, who argues in his work 'Voodoo on the Doorstep' (2001), that the efficacy of the oath is only felt when the trafficked girl has arrived at the intended destination and tries to defy the oath. This forces the trafficker to resort to violence, threats, and the oath taken to make the girl succumb. Findings from this research have revealed otherwise. It was discovered in this study that a good number of girls who are very inexperienced and are recruited from Nigeria to Italy by the land route, experience violence (however subtle) from the outset. Beginning with the lies and deception that the network feeds its victims (Long 2002) to the traumatic experience at the shrine (Cherti et al. 2013; Europol 2011; Pascoal 2012) the psychological control is affirmed.

Furthermore, the killing and eating of animals as part of the oath-taking ritual opens the victim to another form of psychological violence meant to instil fear (US DoS 2014). Another dimension to the traumatic experience suffered by victims before reaching their destination in Europe is the collection of some specific parts of the body, for example, nails, hair, blood, and so on, which are not returned until the debt is repaid (Nwogu 2008). In light of this, this study therefore validates the position of Cherti et al. (2013), who posit that oath taking occurs when the potential sex worker is already vulnerable. A returnee from Italy had this to say:

> I am an orphan and when my mother died, I was put in care of my Aunt, who did not have enough money to send me to school or to learn a trade. She then told me one day that I was to go and live with a friend of hers. When the friend came around, I was taken to a 'juju' house where I was asked to swear. I was really scared of the things I saw in the 'juju' house, where I was asked to swear, so I did what I was asked to do. It was there I was told I had to always obey whatever my Aunt's friend said. She told me we were travelling abroad and we were going by aeroplane. I trusted whatever she told me completely. When we embarked on the trip and I realized it was going to be by land, I felt a little unhappy and disappointed; but I could not go back or say anything because I always remembered what I saw at the 'juju' house. I spent close to two months on the 'route' and on getting to Italy. I was exhausted. As soon as I made 'the call' to my Aunt's friend, I was smuggled out of camp and taken to her house. She had arranged some new clothes for me and then she told me to rest for the day and I was to begin working the next day. When I realized the nature of job I was to do, I could not even utter a single word of complaint because I knew I had already tied myself to whatever she asked me to do by swearing that oath.

Another category of the naïve are those prospective sex workers who were not informed of the nature of the job they are to take on before getting to their destination in Europe, but who are asked to take an oath based on the fact that when they get to Europe, they will stick to their madams. This category of potential sex workers might also have been told that the journey will be by air and they may have consented to the whole process. The difference here is that some of these potential sex workers, on finding out the deception their traffickers subject them to, coupled with the distressing experience along the route, protest and cry out for help. They do so not in expectation of help from law enforcement agents back home, but from family, friends, and relatives. As a respondent recollected:

> I did not tell anyone of my intention to travel to Italy. I had met the trolley that was employed to take me, through a friend who was planning to go as well. We spoke to our madam on the phone and she arranged with the trolley who was to take us and two other girls. Our madam had told us that we would get to Europe using flight and that the trolley was helping to arrange our travel documents. On the day we were to go, we took a bus to Kano and I began to wonder if we were to travel through Kano International Airport; but when we got to Kano State and still did not head towards the airport, I began to feel very uncomfortable. On getting to Agadez, I could not hold it [in] any longer as I was very weak and tired from no food and drinking water only once a day. I decided to ask the trolley what was going on and why we were not using the aeroplane as promised. He revealed to us that he was paid to take us to Libya by land route and that we had to manage the little resources that had been made available to him to buy water along the route as water was more important for our sustenance. When I heard what he had to say, I was infuriated and wanted to look for a way to go back but my friend then reminded me of the oaths we took and how we were in the middle of nowhere. We decided to keep moving, but I then asked to contact a friend of mine to send some money to my account so I could access it on getting to Dirkhou or Libya. My friend sent the money and I was able to collect it and use it for food and buy other supplies such as '*garri*' from other passengers, which helped a lot along the trip [...]

For this respondent, protesting and crying out for help was not an indication that she was reneging on the conditions of the oath she had taken; nor did it mean she would not continue the journey. For her, it meant that she would seek alternate arrangements and make plans for her welfare while en-route. On this note, it is pertinent to say that the oath taken was one of the reasons that deterred her from protesting to the relevant authorities. Indeed, she could have informed her friend of her predicament and asked her to report to the relevant authorities in charge; instead, she asked for money to sustain her in the wilderness of horror in which she had found herself.

A third category of the naïve potential sex worker finds expression in groups who are also deceived and manipulated into the trip, but who are spared the agony and violence of travelling via the land route. Instead, the sex workers in this category are given (sometimes forged) documents and flown to their destination in Europe. These individuals are led to believe that the madam has expended a lot of resources on the trip and their primary obligation is pay back the agreed amount by engaging in sex work, which they were not initially told about.

Ikeora (2016) opines that the term 'brainwashing' should not be employed in relation to oath taking and trafficking for sex work. She argues that the sex workers believe in the oath-taking practice and its efficacy. This belief in the oath is exploited by madams and manipulated to suit their cause. This research confirms Ikeora's claim but reveals that the 'brainwashing' of potential sex workers begins when the madams do not disclose the implications of the amount to be paid back by the girls, or the harsh reality of the job on arrival in Europe. The network creates an impression that the debt incurred at the recruitment and trafficking stage is easily achievable within a short period as long as they can obey the instructions given to them.

Another respondent recollected:

> I had agreed to pay 40,000 euros to my Madam; I took the oath and waited for my documents to be issued. My visa was issued and I travelled to Italy a few days later. On arrival, I was introduced to the work, I reluctantly accepted. I eventually accepted because of the oath I had taken. I worked for over a year and I realized that the money I agreed to pay was not small money considering the amount I made on a weekly basis and what I had been able to pay back in a year. Based on my calculations and records, I had not been able to pay half of the money I agreed with my madam in a year [...] I was yet to send money home to my family [...].

The above respondent did not understand the financial debt she had plunged herself into when she became involved with the madam. She did not consider things like the exchange rate as she agreed to the terms; rather, her goal was to make money.

The different categories of sex workers that were introduced to the network and robbed of their innocence experienced more untold and unspeakable trauma compared to other categories. This may be as a result of their efforts to keep their oaths or to abide by the rules of the madam, the trolley and the juju priest).

A different group of sex workers also exists. This particular group has some degree of experience and has been exposed to relatives or friends who have previously -embarked on the trip to Europe (Sanchez 2001) and who have returned to tell an interesting story of wealth and affluence. For this category, the desire to become rich against all odds supersedes whatever conditions they have to face: the horrific experience of the desert, the life-threatening 'balloon' boat-ride on the Mediterranean Sea coupled with the harsh working

conditions in Italy, constantly on the run from the police, exposure to strange weather conditions, and so on. Here, the findings of Kienast et al. (2014) confirm the notion that some victims elect to embark on such a journey to effect a change in their economic status. This is also in line with Attoh's (2007) research, which speaks to the concept of remittances to effect development back home and how this has begun to influence the perceptions of the Edo's towards sex work.

This group of girls understands the significance of the oath and are willing to go ahead without causing any complications for the network. A respondent from Muritala Mohammed in Benin confirmed that:

> My madam did not inform me of the nature of the job I was to do in Italy; rather, she told me I was going to be a nanny for her friend's kids. In fact, she asked me to try to learn some nursery rhymes in order to keep up with the charade. I had a neighbour who had gone to Italy very wretched and had come back to build a gigantic edifice for her parents in Benin. Another cousin of mine whose mother was heavily in debt was able to set up a very lucrative business for her mum when she went to Europe. So, when I heard of the 'connection', I was determined to go through with the process, [as long as] it did not include loss of my life. However, at some point I really wanted to return; then I remembered that I was not going to come back home to anything, and I had sworn to pay back money to my madam and, of course, the condition of living in Benin was not welcoming. I decided to forge ahead and brace all the odds. At some point on the trip towards Libya in the desert, rebels were raiding and we had to hide in the empty tanker of a petrol truck, it was so hot inside and everyone had to maintain silence despite the urge to cough from insufficient air. We all kept still until it was safe to come out. I sweated so much that day and I thought I was going to lose my life but it did not deter me from continuing the journey as I was determined to get to Italy to make it in life […].

Another category of sex workers has also been identified. This group is quite different from the rest and its members are known as the 'initiators'. Sex workers in this category believe that they can only change the dystopian living conditions that they are exposed to in Benin by securing a trip to the Global North, which they believe is a land of plenitude. They seek the attention of the traffickers and commit themselves to the conditions of travel and work, however unfavourable. They are told of the nature of the job, the conditions of travel, and the debt they will incur from being a part of the network. For such people it is a conscious venture; this venture may have been conceived

by parents or relatives of the potential sex worker as a consequence of the extremely impoverished life that is their reality (Blackburn et al. 2010) as captured in the revelation below:

> They tell me before I go oh", meaning, I was told before I embarked on the trip. I was in hell in Benin here, I had a son whom I needed to provide for, but the means was not there. To eat was a problem, and then my mother who was a small-time farmer had an accident while on the farm. I was desperate to look for a way out. I told some of my closest friend of my predicament; then one of them told me of the opportunity to go and meet a woman who recruits girls to Italy. The woman who became my madam took me to a local pub in Benin where sex workers display themselves for prospective clients. There she told me to look at them, that that was the kind of work I was going to Italy for. She then asked me to go home and think about it and then give her a reply. I told her immediately that I was interested and didn't need to think about it further […].

It becomes obvious at this point that instances where returnees from Italy display their wealth might have been 'staged' to create the desired effect for desperate young girls who will become future sex workers themselves. Therefore, the rich and sophisticated lifestyle of those 'former' sex workers who attained their 'freedom' and who begin to 'live the dream' becomes the 'bait' for this category of potential sex workers who intend to make it against all odds. For this group, the oath taking is mandatory as there is a higher likelihood of them defaulting on the promise of the oath due to their desperation to survive.

The identification of different categories of potential sex workers recruited to different parts of Italy from Edo State highlights the fact that, for some groups, the oaths taken before embarking on the journey plays a vital role in keeping them in check throughout their sojourn. For other groups, the oaths taken alongside the lure to 'get rich' are the contributing factors; for yet others, the desire for success is the motivating factor, while the oaths taken are conceived as an 'occupational hazard'.

Of the 22 returnees interviewed during the course of this project, 73 per cent of them fell into the inexperienced category of girls who had no idea of the nature of the job and who were taken to the shrine for oath taking. These women travelled via the desert route and did not protest, especially when they found out the working conditions in Italy.

Another ten per cent can be considered as being naïve and vulnerable but who protested the working/travelling conditions to some extent, but, importantly, they stayed as a result of the oaths they had taken. Fifty per cent of the respondents had some knowledge of the nature of the job as a result of previous stories heard but went ahead as a result of both the oaths sworn and the desire to leave the 'dystopian' conditions in which they find themselves.

The study further reveals that ten per cent of the returnees had established knowledge of the intended 'job', were informed that the trip would be by the land route and still they opted to carry on, while two per cent was not aware that the trip was to be by the land route but still went ahead with the plan.

The system of exploitation of sex workers in Italy underscores Marx's theory of social alienation (Clarkson 1973). The sex worker cannot be the beneficiary of the returns of her work; nor can she play a part in the decision-making process. By simply selling sex for material gain and not partaking of its proceeds, they simultaneously lose connection with the object of labour (in this case, cash or kind) and are considered objects themselves. They are devalued to the level of the money they can generate and their bodies become commodities in the hands of traffickers. Hence, the use of the term 'modern-day slavery' to capture the operations of the trafficking network.

4.6 Transnationalism of Silence in the Political Economy of Edo Transnational Sex Work

According to Faist (2010), the concept of transnationalism focuses on issues of mobility and networks. Transnationalism in this sense promises a broader understanding of all the forms and implications that derive from the vast movements of populations, ideas, technologies, images, and financial networks that have come to shape the world we live in today (Quayson and Daswani 2011). On a more general level, Faist (2010) asserts that concepts such as transnationalism, transnational spaces, fields, and formations refer to processes that transcend international borders and therefore appear to describe more 'abstract phenomena' in a social science language. Silence as a concept and illustration of abstract phenomena in this case takes different forms while it moves across borders with Edo transnational sex workers. It is apt to explore the different forms this silence takes within the context of transnational sex work among Edo women/girls.

Silence from Security Operatives

Due to the nature of the intended job in Italy, the network had to be one that maintained silence from security operatives as they moved. From the operations in Benin City where the oaths are usually taken through the land route to Kano, security operatives are never told the true intention of the 'potential' sex workers' reason for travel. This silence is observed throughout the journey; along the route, there are different checkpoints and search areas, with law enforcement agents, rebels, and guerrilla fighters, up until rescue boats from Italy pick up the would-be sex worker. The reason for embarking on the journey is almost never disclosed. This form of silence is multifaceted as Ganzevoort (2015) illustrates. It is a combination of two or more different forms of silence: the 'repressive' silence that prevents the use of the voice in order to conceal the truth and the transforming silence that involves a choice to either employ speech to convey meaning or not. The choice not to disclose the actual intention of the journey rests in the hands of the sex worker while en route, but the construction of the 'fake' storyline is a product of the transnational network she belongs to (Vertovec 1999). Here, the efficacy of transnationalism as an abstract phenomena (Baubock and Faist 2010) is affirmed once the potential sex worker either maintains silence as an absence of speech to the different groups encountered on the trip or if she employs the use of her imagination or the imagination of the network to conjure stories far from the truth. Throughout the journey, both on land and by air, the silence of the sex worker is guaranteed.

Another aspect to the silence from security operatives during the land route sojourn to Europe (Italy) is the deliberate concealment of 'enhancers', charms, and amulets in everyday items, which look ordinary but are actually symbolic representations of religious sentiments (Quayson and Daswani 2013). These items are packaged to look ordinary but clearly constitute a construction of silence that seeks to negotiate boundaries. This form of silence is presented with tangible materials that are markers of the fluidity that accompanies intangibility, that is, their malleability is exploited to a large extent. This particular form of silence clearly illustrates the theory of 'abstract phenomena'.

A respondent who was deported from Italy recently said:

> We were a company of six girls and two men in our troupe. One of the men was our 'trolley' and was very knowledgeable of the land route. We encountered some security personnel around Dirkhou and were thoroughly

> searched. On my own, I had collected some trinkets and concoction mixed with talcum powder, which was supposed to aid my 'work' on getting to my destination. I put the powdery concoction in a talcum powder container so that no questions will be asked regarding its content. I couldn't bear to lose it. So, I had to be wise about displaying it; the idea worked for me and I was able to move it into Italy for it to serve its purpose […].

The respondent above realized the importance of the 'enhancer' to her 'job' and needed to package it in such a way that it became a form of 'silence' to security operatives and other groups, rebels, bandits, and so on, who were patrolling the land route.

The study revealed another angle to the silence from security operatives as exhibited by sex workers. This strand of silence speaks to the period of arrival and operation in their destination. Silence in this instance assumes the dimension of avoidance of the security operatives, as another respondent recollected:

> I and the rest of the girls under my madam were given a form of orientation on our arrival in Italy. We were told the areas where the police tend to raid more, raiding times, spots to get high-paying clients, and so on. Although we know we had to avoid the police at all cost, we were taught how to escape from them whenever we found ourselves caught in a raid. In actual fact, the police became my enemy and I didn't want to have anything to do with them as they were constant reminders that I could face deportation anytime.

The above illustrates that the police became the sex worker's nightmare and they had to keep their distance from them. At this point, one is left to wonder whether the dynamics in the receiving country, in this case, Italy, are no less different from what happens back home. The issue of sex workers trying to evade arrest by becoming 'invisible' to police officers raises an important question. Are their arrests for immigration purposes alone or are they a combination of factors, for example, engaging in sex work or soliciting for customers? If the answer lies around the former, then it is safe to assume that the authorities are only concerned with maintaining order in their society. If, however, the police involvement borders around soliciting for customers or raiding the streets to be rid of sex workers, then, according to Attoh (2007), it becomes an offshoot of the patriarchy, a system that subjugates the woman. Then, one begins to question the activities of the state regarding the issue of sex work and sex workers. For example, if the central focus is to discourage sex work as a trade, why are male clients who seek the services of sex workers

not arrested? Why is the focus more on women to discourage the practice? It speaks to a deep sense of power dynamics in gender relations and how the victim/perpetrator is constructed in this case between the sex worker and her male client. Another respondent stated that:

> On the day I was captured, the police raided our 'spot' and took a lot of us unawares. I was dressed in heeled footwear, so it was very difficult to physically try to run away. I was taken to their base where they asked me a lot of questions which I chose not to respond appropriately to. Although I was afraid of the circumstance in which I found myself, I knew I could not give them the information they sought.

Stripped of the agency and 'cover' that the network provides, the sex worker in this case is left to her own discretion to either divulge information to the authorities or face deportation. Once the latter is chosen, the silence of the sex worker is established and she would rather see herself back home than expose the rest of her network. This creates an avenue for exploring the dimensions of 'abstract phenomena'. The sex worker becomes bound not just by belonging to the network, which is highly connected by dense ties across boundaries (Quayson and Daswani 2013), but also by reinforcing the bond of the oaths taken at home that are still efficacious thousands of miles away in another space and time.

In addition, all the respondents affirmed that the oaths sworn also include words to the effect that the oath taker was not to 'report' any of their activities to the police or any other security/government agency. Put differently, other sex workers swore to the fact that a third party would not learn of their activities. This study therefore argues that they become an embodiment of transnational silence.

Another perspective to this silence is revealed in the testimony of a sex worker who became ill but who was refused medical attention because she did not possess legal residence status. The silence in this case is borne out of the fear of being handed over to the authorities who would question and probably deport her:

> During my stay in Italy, I had pneumonia, twice. The nurse who usually treated us when we had minor ailments advised me to go to the hospital to seek medical care as the pneumonia was becoming critical and she could not handle it anymore. I knew I could not go to the hospital because I had no papers and did not want to risk exposure to the police, since every

> institution is connected in Italy. I had to bear the suffering in silence and took medications here and there to douse the effect of the pain […].

Silence therefore became a part of their work and lifestyle. The women had to decide when to be seen, when to be heard, and when to fade into the background, no matter how detrimental these actions may be to their well-being.

Silence from Family and Friends

A significant percentage of the potential sex workers interviewed did not tell their parents/guardians, siblings, and friends. This was done for various reasons ranging from the advice given to them by the trafficking network to the words of the oaths taken and, more generally, because of the fear that too many people knowing of one's plans might have a negative effect on the plan. A respondent mentioned that:

> Our madam advised us not to tell anyone because we did not know what they had in mind, and telling anyone might lead to envy, which can make people do extreme things. I did not even tell my mother of my travelling plans; it was when I got to Italy and was settled in that I called her and told her where I was [...].

The trafficking network's instructions to the potential sex worker to conceal travel preparations stem from the following reasons:

- The desire to keep their operations as quick as possible and away from the prying eyes of family or friends, who might decide to protest the potential sex worker's decision to embark on the journey or invite relevant authorities to investigate, which may ultimately lead to arrest and /or prosecution.
- The trafficking network thrives on vulnerable young girls (Cherti et al. 2013), who, as a result of their vulnerability (which might stem from naïvety or poverty) are ready to please the traffickers, without asking questions. For example, if older and more experienced or enlightened family members become aware of the travel plans, it might spell disaster for the network.

- The practice of syncretism is prevalent in Edo State Carling (2005), but it is shrouded in secrecy. Christians or Muslims who visit traditional temples do so in secret. Also, traditionalists do not expose their operations to the public. This may be, as Ikeora (2016) suggests, a product of modernity, which looks down on traditional institutions only to embrace Western practice. The fact that the oaths taken are sworn in a shrine might deter some parents or guardians from permitting their ward to partake in such ritual processes. The belief that visiting a shrine and or bowing to other 'gods' is a sin for Christians is also widespread. This does not undermine the fact that most of these parents seek spiritual help from traditional temples and worship centres. However, when the reason for visiting or taking an oath in a shrine is related to travelling to Italy or any part of Europe, it raises suspicions.
- For other categories of girls in this group, they might reveal their intention to go to Europe but intentionally leave out the details of the intended job description. In this regard, one of the respondents confided that:

  > My madam told me I was going to Europe to become a singer as she had connections with a studio there. I met her through the pastor of my church in Benin and this made me believe her. My mother was aware of the plan to take me to Europe to take my 'talent' to the next level. When I arrived in Moscow and the reality hit me, I still did not tell my mother; she did not have any idea of the kind of job I was forced to do and I did not tell her even when I found out [...].

The study revealed that the above respondent did not have the details of her job in Europe spelled out to her while still in Benin and, although she carried her mother with her and told her of her plans, when the reality of the 'job' hit her, she kept it all from her mother.

Two main factors were identified in the research that best explain the reason for concealing the information when the recruited sex workers figured out the nature of the job. First, a sex worker who left the shores of Nigeria with high hopes, only to get to Europe and find out that the job description was not honourable enough (Kienast et al. 2014) may feel inclined to leave out the full details as a result of the shame and guilt that she feels.

Secondly, the network preaches a culture of silence. The network in which she finds herself thrives in a lifestyle of 'transnational' silence, thus finding

out the details of her job becomes a small 'sin' considering the actions of other sex workers in the network.

Silence between Sex Workers under the Same Madam

The study by Kienast et al. (2014) offers an insight into this category of silence and shows how the madam tries to keep sex workers focused on the job, without distractions from within the network. The goal here is to deliberately incite competition among the sex workers under her to bring out the best in each one of them. If the madam is successful in this regard, then the sex workers will try to outdo one another while at the same time keep relevant information to themselves.

A returnee revealed that:

> On the day, I was to swear the oath it was done in a shrine close to a village around [the] Ugoneki area. I and seven other girls under my madam were made to swear. After the ritual we went back to the trolley's residence to finalize our plans. When we embarked on the journey, one of the girls whom we swore together [with] had cut her hair low and it was later I found out that it was necessary to do that. I eventually had to cut mine very low along the line. Another significant thing she did that made me feel she was well-informed but was keeping these details to herself was the fact that she was always able to send money home. In fact, she had strategic points where she kept her stash and, at intervals, she was able to send money home to her folks. I found out all this on a certain day when I decided to trail her after work [...].

The above testimony reveals the silence among sex workers; they sometimes do not share information. This begs the question whether the madam, in this case, decides to divulge important information to select girls and leave others out to keep the competition among the sex workers high and to secure a level of suspicion among them in order to reaffirm their total dependency on her. According to Kienast et al. (2014), in situations like this, the sex worker would then have no choice but to consult the madam for advice, and then the madam can understand her fears, worries, and issues with the job. As stated earlier, this deliberate silence amongst the women becomes a breeding ground for suspicion, especially when it is related to work.

Another respondent confirmed that:

> Our madam was always pleased with the returns one of the girls made and she mentioned it one day that although we started together, some girls might pay up faster than others if they were smart enough. I became curious to know how she made so much money, more than me. I found out that she already had 'connections' in Italy and they always introduced her to 'rich' clients who were very generous, in fact, it was like they belonged to an exclusive club that non-members could not benefit from.

Silences between Madams and the Sex Workers

The madams of sex networks have ensured that some silences remain between the leadership of the network and the sex workers. This silence begins at the point of recruitment where the potential sex worker is not told the exact kind of job she will be engaging in. This silence is deliberately maintained to ensure the cooperation of the potential sex worker throughout the journey (Cherti et al. 2013; Carling 2006; Plambech 2014; Kienast et al. 2014).

Another dimension of silence between the madams and sex worker is the deliberate deception employed when referring to the mode of transportation of the potential sex worker to Europe (Italy).

A respondent explained that:

> My madam knew we were going to go by [the] land route but she did not tell us. She only asked that we ensure we got our international passport. I decided to ask and confirm; she told me plainly that the trip was going to be by air and, after all the travel documents were ready, we would move to Lagos to board our flight out of the country. However, when we were about to embark on the journey to Kano, at the start of the route, my madam did not go with us. Instead, she handed us over to a man whom she said was to take charge of the trip. At first, I did not ask the man, but when we got to the desert and different things began to happen, I decided to ask him. His reply was that he had been paid by our madam to carry us through the desert to Tripoli [...] we would then cross over to Italy; there was no mention of a flight. It was then I realized that I had been deceived by my madam […].

This deliberate silence exhibited by the madam might be as a result of a number of factors:

Funds for travel: In most cases, these madams do not leave the shores of Nigeria with only one sex worker, it therefore becomes financially demanding to cross to Italy by air.

Non-issuance of visa/travel documents: Foreign embassies and services are sometimes critical of travellers' reason for travel and deny them entry visas. Very young and inexperienced girls who cannot defend their reason for travel are frequently denied. This poses a huge problem for trafficking networks and, as a result, an alternative and certain means of travel is usually preferred (Plambech 2014).

Additionally, agencies that produce 'fake' documents sometimes do not pull through and the madam has to seek alternative arrangements. From another perspective, the sex workers also deliberately keep some things silent from their leaders and madams. This happens more often when the sex worker has already arrived at the Italian destination and begun the 'job'.

One of the respondents narrated that:

> At first, when I began working for my madam on arrival in Italy, I would make sure I delivered all my earnings to her, despite the fact that I knew I would be searched. It was not until I found out that some of my madam's other girls had devised a way of keeping some money aside to send back home that I started doing same. We all knew that our madam should not find out and we had taken oaths to ensure our obedience but we still devised secret methods of sending money home […]

4.7 The Implication of 'Transnationalism of Silence' on the Political Economy of Edo Transnational Sex Work

From the findings of this study, it is evident that the sex work network thrives on varying degrees of transnational silence (Baubock and Faist 2010), oiling the wheels and thereby sustaining Edo-transnational sex work. This study therefore argues that the 'silences' in the network are as effective as the oaths and the oath-taking ritual in actualizing the goals of the network. Furthermore, these silences are also important to the network's future. For example, if the (bitter) experience of the sex workers who have travelled via the land route is made public, it may deter others from making the decision to embark on the trip, thereby having gross implications for the recruitment of new sex workers. Ironically, the practice of oath taking in Edo is not

particularly hidden. The reason for the ritual or the proceedings of the ritual may need to be kept silent, but the practice itself is quite common in Edo State.

In an interview with an official from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, the agent revealed that, in most cases, it is very difficult to get information from deported sex workers. He attributed this to the fact that a good number of them have sworn to keep the activities of the network secret and to never involve a third party. It is therefore almost impossible to obtain information from former sex workers or to get them to serve as witnesses when their traffickers are being prosecuted. He stated further that the agency had to devise extreme means to get the girls to talk. For example, sometimes they ask the victim to locate the shrine where the oath-taking ritual was done and then proceed to arrest the juju priest and to compel him to conduct an 'oath-breaking' ritual in order to 'free' the victims free to talk about their experience. For NAPTIP, this is the most effective means to get former sex workers to talk about the activities of the network. The reality here is what Carling (2006) references when he makes a case for syncretism in Edo State. The belief in God is represented in a plethora of ways: from indigenous belief systems to Christianity. The collapse of public institutions as a product of neo-colonialism in Nigeria has further increased the dependence on religion for succour. Contemporary realities have also complicated the issue, leading to corruption of public officials in the race for capital, which gives rise to a complete loss of confidence in the system. When this is the case, the choice is to seek alternative forms of justice from traditional practitioners. For people who do this, the belief is that it is the only way justice can be served; ironically, therefore, for institutions like NAPTIP to get this category of individuals to divulge information, they also have to exploit their beliefs by seeking the intervention of the shrines.

4.8 Edo People and Sex Work: Perspectives and Perceptions

Over the years, according to Ikeora (2016), the sex work network has devised 'better' means to manage the affairs of the industry and this has put them a step ahead of authorities in the recruitment and management of sex workers across the state and beyond. It is important to investigate the perspective of individuals engaged in the sex work trade as well as the perceptions of the members of the community in which the sex work phenomenon emanates from.

The revelations garnered from sex workers help to justify the attractions of the industry to potential recruits and also help 'outsiders' to the cultural practice understand its ramifications, which would eventually lead to a solution.

The Sex Workers' Perspective

As categorized earlier, this study examined the intentions of the sex worker who moves or is moved from the homeland in Benin City in Edo State to a destination in Europe to engage in sex work albeit often in circumstances without her consent. Problematizing the sex worker's resignation to the job therefore becomes an interesting angle to investigate:

- The naïve: Although brutally forced into following this line of work, the decision to remain and continue working with the madam rests solely on the 'young' newly recruited sex worker. What therefore informs her decision to continue in the line of work? A respondent who had spent four years in Italy, touring a lot of countries while on the job explained that:

  > For me, I was introduced to this line when I was barely fifteen years old. In fact, I was soliciting for funds for my final exams in secondary school when a neighbour friend of my paternal uncle, who I lived with, told me she was going to help me out. I never realized that the 'help' meant coming to Italy to 'work' like this for money, however, I coped. I was able to cope because of the 'freedom' that came with this place. [As long as] I paid my madam whatever I earned and avoid the police while on duty, my freedom knows no bounds; in fact, I have been able to travel the world through this lifestyle and I believe if I had remained in Edo, my life would not have been this interesting.

The testimony above invites critical examination of the reasons why group of sex workers continues in this line of work. Utilizing the word 'freedom', this particular respondent has been able to articulate her reason for remaining in the job.

'Freedom', in this case, can be examined literally or metaphorically. From a literal point of view, one can infer that the sex worker now has the right to go out and come in as she pleases without necessarily being answerable to anyone, except that she had to surrender her earnings, which is a small price to pay for this kind of 'freedom'. But ironically, it also enslaves her to the network (Weber in Clarkson 1973). In this regard, the study by Attoh (2007) suffices. The research establishes the connection between trafficking

and gender violence and concludes that the victims become 'chattels of their families' in their bid to put their families first and try to please them. She argues that the trafficking process is sustained not only for its economic potential, but also to enforce obedience among young female members of the families who should not be free to do whatever they want, but who should subject themselves to the authority of the male head of the household. Here, the girls in the families are considered inferior and subjected to unequal treatment in comparison to male children. This paradigm, Attoh argues, breeds situations of gender violence.

Another angle, however, suggests financial liberty, one that guarantees her living in comfort and some form of affluence compared with her humble 'beginnings' (see Kienast et al. 2014). This particular 'freedom' plays a major role and determines and informs her decision to stay. The 'freedom' as mentioned can also imply passion for sex, after a while on the job.

The semi-experienced sex worker on the other hand had some form of exposure to the sex work phenomenon before she was introduced, but elected to stay on in the system:

> I had a neighbour who had gone to Italy very wretched and in a space of years had come back to build a gigantic edifice for her parents in Benin. Another cousin of mine, whose mother was heavily in debt, was able to set up a very lucrative business for her mum when she went to Europe. So, when I heard of the 'connection', I was determined to go through with the process, [as long as] it did not include the loss of my life [...]. At some point, I really wanted to return, and then I remembered that I was not going to come back to anything.

For this returnee sex worker, the decision to stay was borne out of the 'fear' of living in the dystopian conditions in Benin. For her, the thought of returning to her poor economic state of affairs was the motivating factor, implying that the harsh economic realities in the current state of affairs back home did not avail her of the opportunity to make her 'dreams' come true, leading to her decision not to come back despite the nature of the job. Also, the fact that she might have pictured the European space as one of affluence, evidenced by stories of 'successful' returnees who had remitted funds back home to effect development (Odorige 2016), may have influenced her decision to stay on in order to make such money for herself and her family.

For the initiators, they seek the attention of the traffickers and elect to undertake the journey however rigorous it proves to be. A returnee who falls into this category explained that:

> I needed to find a way out of the mess in which I found myself here in Benin. I had a child for a man who had recently died and it was almost like living in hell for me. I could not secure any job as there was none around and the few ones were for skilled workers. I decided to meet up with a friend who had 'Italo' connections. This was where my 'hustlement' story began.

A number of sex workers who had prior knowledge of the intended job tended to call the practice 'hustlement'. On realizing this, interrogating the dimensions of the meanings that hustlement embody became a top priority.

'Hustlement'

Investigating the dimensions of 'hustlement' provides an insight into the sex worker's state of mind when she elects to subject herself to a transnational voyage that involves crossing territorial boundaries, through the desert, encountering dangerous rebel groups along the way, and continuing the journey with the conviction that 'there was light at the end of the tunnel'.

The socio-economic reality of Edo State notwithstanding, there is a thriving dollar economy in the state and young girls are in a 'race' to catch up. This may be as a result of the huge amounts of remittances (Odorige 2016) recorded by the state in foreign currency, owing to their transnational activities abroad. For some, catching up entails rising to the challenge, getting a better education, and securing their future to meet the demands of a globalized or globalizing world. For others, it implies seeking other ways to secure economic fulfilment. This fulfilment is achieved when they can secure positions that expose them to acquiring foreign currency that, in comparison to the naira, could translate into huge sums. According to the sex worker, this is a major achievement. To the girls who engage in 'hustlement', it is an honest means of making a living that is desirable and can elevate one's status and effect some sort of development back home in the form of remittances (Odorige 2016). These can be used for the construction of hotels and residential buildings that may generate income for family members in the form of rent.

'Hustlement' also encapsulates the adventure a 'hustler' faces to actualize her dreams, hence the word 'hustle', i.e. depicting struggle to achieve/accomplish

your desires. For the sex worker who has prior information about the inherent dangers of engaging in such travel and work, therefore, it becomes a part of the struggle. This concept mirrors the idea of survivalist cosmopolitanism; it underscores the notion that the African strand of cosmopolitanism is quite distinguishable as it begins with a burning desire to travel to a destination where affluence can be realized, maintaining close ties with the homeland; that is, reinforcing national solidarity and sending returns back home in the form of remittances. The experience of sex workers who go to Italy to 'hustle' is also an illustration of the binary between host and strangers that strips the citizens of the Global South of agency when they are regarded as 'strangers' when they move to the Global North (Olaoluwa 2013).

Shame and Regret

During the interview sessions with returnees who had returned to Benin, many displayed some form of shame laced with elements of regret. It should be noted that the kind of shame felt is as a result of not achieving their dreams – the dream of making it 'big' in Europe, which was crushed as a result of paying back the huge debt on a daily basis to their madam from their earnings. This translates into depression for those sex workers who were not able to send money back home. Regret also features when the subject of police raids and deportation is raised.

One of the respondents recollected that:

> I had nearly completed payments to my madam when I got deported. I wish I had not taken that route that day [...] all this happened just about when I wanted to begin enjoying myself and set up something tangible back home. Well, if I ever get an opportunity to return, I will try to work hard and start up a business in Benin […].

The reason for regret in this instance stems from her being caught up in the police's net, leading to her ultimate return home without achieving her dreams.

The Edo People

There are different narratives on the perception of Edo people about sex work. Some scholars are of the opinion that it is a product of a patriarchal system that seeks to reduce the woman/girl to a product in the hands of the society governed by men (Attoh 2007). Other studies have examined it from an economic angle, concluding that the 'returns' that are derived from trafficking networks, and that flow into the state, make the whole operation acceptable. Here, acceptance is tied to the flow of money, which, however it is obtained, illustrates success (Odorige 2016). From a feminist angle, as opined by Alobo and Ndifon (2014), sex work is viewed as an affirmation of female subjugation by men folk.

The tradition of the Benin and Edo people in general deeply abhors the act, as confirmed in an interview with a traditional prince:

> The tradition spells that women and girls maintain their chastity till marriage. In fact, ancient Benin kingdom had a practice of making a new bride confide in the members of her husband's family the number of men she had been intimate within the past. If the number is on the high side, the woman in question is made to go through a ritual where she is cleansed and asked to swear that she will not keep any of her intimate partners anymore and will be faithful to her marriage […].

It was also revealed that despite the cultural implications of engaging in sex work, members of this network do not see themselves as deviants; rather, they see the sex work as a means of survival. Engaging in activities that the culture and traditions of their land abhors seems to be the least of their concerns. This study was able to identify a parent, who, despite her cultural knowledge, still aided her daughter into the sex work network. In an interview, the zonal commander of NAPTIP Benin stated that:

> A lot of cases I have handled, the parents of returnee sex workers are, in most cases, aware of the intention to travel and encourage their wards to embark on the journey. One particular case struck me because the mother of the sex worker who came to report to us was at first in on the whole business, but after years and years of wanting for returns of her daughter who was in Europe and nothing was forthcoming, she decided to report the issue to us, claiming that she had not spoken to her daughter for two years and she

> was scared the worst might have happened. After much investigation, we discovered that the girl in question had died from drug overdose […].

A respondent from Ikpoba-Okha stated that:

> My mother urged me to go with my madam, even though she was well aware of the implications of my going to Italy. She encouraged me to look at the good part of the job, the fact that the returns will be able to sustain me over there and then help her back home. She also reminded me of her sister's daughter who had left a few years ago and how since then, her sister now receives euros and dollars from her daughter. I took the decision to go with my madam after this advice from my mother […].

It is necessary at this point to consider the idea that the standard of living and the lifestyle of 'successful' sex workers and madams in the network contributes to the new and evolving culture of acceptance of sex work by some groups in the society. This is due to the economic value of such an enterprise and how this ultimately feeds their status in the society.

The study revealed that women who belong to clubs and societal groups have financial obligations as members and part of this obligation is to engage in community projects and provide charity to the less privileged. On a closer examination of women who belong to these associations, their affinity with Europe does not go unnoticed; they are either returnees themselves or have wards who reside in Europe or have links with successful madams or sex workers who send money to them on a regular basis.

As the evolving cultural practice privileges economic gains so it also encourages the elevation of social status among beneficiaries. Consequently, for these beneficiaries, who over time have become quite numerous, the acceptance of this line of work by the society becomes really important. (Odorige 2016). In a subtle manner, the merits of living abroad or having a family member who does so is encouraged, indirectly fanning the desire for the younger generation to engage in such practices. The previous practice of scorning promiscuous women has become obsolete with time and the new tradition of emulating the European lifestyle is encouraged.

According to a NAPTIP official:

> In Benin, you see these high society women spraying dollars and euros at parties, spending vacation periods in different parts of the world and, in a lot of instances, operating an underground ring or sex trafficking network that funds all these operations […].

4.9 The Oath-Taking Ritual

In Plambech (2014), juju refers to a popular term for various forms of traditional medicine and black magic. Empirical data on interaction with juju, as conducted by Edo people, encourages the conceptualization of the term to encapsulate the practice of traditional religion involving medicine, divination, sorcery, enchantments, etc. Its effects are often brought into being by calling upon the divine or supernatural by means of incantations or sacrifice. For Nwogu (2008: 52), "[v]oodoo is a religion which includes ritual oaths in its practice […]." The practice of oath taking in juju or voodoo can therefore be defined as a solemn, formal declaration or promise to fulfil a pledge, often calling on a god or a sacred object as witness, Jegede (2011).

Empirical data indicates that while juju can be used in the context of trafficking, it is actually the use of traditional oath taking that is dominant (Ikeora 2016). Nwogu (2008) affirms that oaths as a part of traditional religious beliefs are often administered in a ritual ceremony. The ritual oath therefore is a significant aspect of the operation and is usually conducted in a temple.

As a respondent put it, in Nigerian Pidgin:

> *After I don agree to wetin my madam tell me, she come talk say I go follow her go shrine go swear for juju. The shrine wey we go far from Benin oh, na for that Orhiomuhon side, that place na the headquarter of juju oh. As we enter the village, I notice say people no plenty, say them they sabi farm for that area. When we reach the shrine nko? The place make me fear oh, na my madam come day tell me say make I no worry say nothing go do me. Plenty juju Altars dey inside and dem come mix something inside clay pot wey black like charcoal oh. For that shrine, na woman dey there, she come welcome my madam well well, then tell us to change our cloth as we wan start…*

(When I had agreed to my madam's conditions for the trip, she then told me that I would accompany her to the shrine to swear to the 'juju'. The shrine was at Orhiomwhon, a village, quite a distance from Benin. On getting there, I noticed that it was a small village with a few occupants and their major occupation there was ministration at shrines. I became afraid, the surrounding was quite scary, it was my madam who tried to allay my fears when she told me not to worry that I was safe. There were lot of 'juju' inside the shrine and some black mixtures in a clay pot. The juju' priest at the shrine was a woman, who welcomed my madam and then asked us to change our clothes in commencement of the ritual […]

This respondent was taken to a village outside Benin City to swear the oaths. The madam had arranged beforehand with the juju priest and then fixed a time to bring the girls for the ritual. Agazue (2003) states that these types of temples are located in the hinterland, away from the shores of Benin, which also helps to create a sense of fear and insecurity in the girls. This may be as a result of the strange environment or stories they might have heard in the past concerning people from the town.

Another respondent corroborated the claim when she said, also in Nigerian Pidgin:

Me na Egor side this Trolley carry us go swear for one juju man shrine like this. Na me and other six girls the trolley carry go together. As we reach, na so fear grip me, I even get goose pimples for all my body. The place na so so bush and the juju man come use native chalk draw different marks inside the shrine. Come see all the statue and head of the gods wey dem dey serve for inside the shrine. They come tell us to comot our shoe as we wan enter, na so the juju man begin dey do incantation….

(I was taken to Egor area by the trolley to swear the oath. The juju priest was a man; I and six other girls went together with the trolley. On getting to the shrine, I was scared, I had goose pimples all over my body. The area is quite underdeveloped and the juju priest marked the area inside the shrine with native chalk. There were a number of gods and statues inside the shrine. We were asked to remove our footwear before entering the shrine and then the juju priest began with incantations.)

This also implies that the location of the temple creates the mood of sacredness and fear in the minds of the girls. For other potential sex workers

who took oaths in Benin City, were their feelings any different? Was the aura of fear successfully created?

To answer this question, a respondent informed me that:

> I was taken to a shrine at the Benin-Auchi express road, a little after Ikpoba Hill; it was in a compound owned by the juju priest. On getting to the compound […], hmm, no one realized there was a big shine at the back of the compound. On getting into the shrine, the juju priest was already waiting for us. He was covered in white chalk markings on his body and tied a red cloth over his waist. He was holding a horse tail and a small gourd, which he put down to begin the ritual process. I was filled with fear as the ritual commenced and the priest began talking to his deities in a language I did not understand. With what I saw there, even if I don't worship the gods, I won't want to have problems with that man. Even at times when I wanted to quit the work when I got to Europe, anytime I remembered my visit to the shrine, I told myself not to try it […].

The particular area described above is located in the outskirts of Benin City and this has recently been undergoing some form of development. On entering the shrine, the girl in question confirmed that she had a feeling of fear, which might have been as a result of the sacredness that being in the temple conjures or coming face to face with the statues of deities in the temple. She stated further that her visit to the shrine discouraged her from breaking the oath she took. The relevance of taking the potential sex workers into the shrine for the oath is underscored by the feeling of fear it creates in the minds of the potential sex workers. This ultimately leads to the 'control' that the leaders of the network ultimately seek (Opara 2007).

According to Garcia (2013), the ritual process seals the pact between women who want to move to Europe and traffickers who commit to pay all costs of the journey on agreement that the women promise to repay the money, to be respectful to the traffickers, and to endeavour not to divulge the identity of the traffickers to the police. The ritual itself involves the collection of items by the juju priest (Nwogu 2008), slaughtering of animals, (Ikeora 2016), and making a solemn vow to repay the debt and not to denounce the traffickers to the police (Garcia 2013).

Items collected are arranged as packages (UNICRI 2010), which are kept with the juju priest. The content of the packets are usually pubic hair, hair from the head, intimate clothing (already worn but not washed underpants),

finger- and toenails, used menstrual pads, sometimes mixed with a piece of metal to depict the presence of Ogun (Van Dijk 2001).

A respondent confirmed that:

> I was asked to come with a pair of pants I had worn the previous day without washing them. On getting to the shrine, my finger and toenails were collected, strands of hair from my armpit and pubic region were also collected. All these were put in a nylon bag, tied, and a paper with my name on it was included to identify the owner [...].

Another respondent corroborated by saying:

> They collected hair from my vagina in the shrine; they also asked me to cut my finger nails and submit to them; they told me that if I refused to obey the vow I was about to take the items they had collected from me would help to prepare 'juju' that might either kill me or any member of my family whom I loved so much.

Slaughtering of Animals

Empirical data reveal that some of the oath-taking rituals involve the slaughtering of animals to seal the pact at the temples (Carling 2005). Another respondent revealed:

> After repeating the words of the priest while taking the oath, a white cock was killed and the blood was sprinkled over my head. I was then asked by the priest to eat a part of the liver of the cock raw, it tasted funny but I had to swallow it; the priest then said this was the final part of the oath taking ritual...

Another respondent said:

> We were more than ten girls who went to swear the oaths in a shrine with our madam. We were made to kneel in front of the gods and say that we would repay the debt incurred from the trip and would not inform a third party about the details of our experience. A goat was slaughtered and we were all given a small piece each to eat.

Mbiti (1977) argues that, in African societies, life is closely associated with blood, sacrifice is very common, and that most involve shedding of blood of a human being or an animal. The above testimonies confirm animal sacrifice in oath taking for transnational sex work purposes. The use of the animal's blood to seal the covenant also speaks to the performative nature (Blunt 2013' Kodres and Mand 2014; Ramos 2015) of the ritual. Such rituals are viewed as episodes of cultural communication that seek to send a message to its audience. The shared belief by the participant(s) and actor and the use of symbols authenticates this. Their identification with the symbols utilized in the rituals serves to intensify the connection between the participants and objects used, thereby creating a lasting image of the ritual (Alexander 2004).

4.10 The Sacred Vow

As the ritual proceeds, the potential sex worker who is to take the oath is an active participant in the whole process. The priest controls the ritual and other witnesses, such as the trolley and relatives of the potential sex worker, may assist, for example, in the undressing of the potential sex worker.

A respondent recollected that:

> As we got to the shrine, I was asked by the priest to remove my shoes and then undress and change into a red wrapper, tied round my underarms. The priest then told me to kneel down in front of the statue of a deity inside the shrine; he gave me kola nut and a hot drink sprinkled with blood from a chicken he had killed when he began the incantations. I drank and was asked to repeat after the priest "I will pay back the sum of 45,000 euros to my madam, I will strive to always obey her instructions, I will not send money home without her consent or maybe after I had paid off my debt and then I would not report any of the processes to the police or any other government agency…".

The wordings of the oath for the above respondent were concise and unambiguous. In this case, default cannot be blamed on a lack of clarity in the wording of the oath. The symbolic use of specific words by participants to express a promise underscores the principles of performance in ritual and illustrates the validity, "[...] the communication's symbolic contents and accepts the authenticity of one's intentions [...]" (Alexander 2004: 528).

A respondent, who had only recently returned, had this to say about the vow she was compelled to take:

> I took the oath by the riverbank; a mixture was prepared containing water from the river and some other ingredients. It was prepared by the priestess after she had made some incantations inside her shrine. At the riverbank, she continued to invoke the gods and then asked me to bathe with the water, as I was bathing she asked me to say that I would not be rude to my madam when I got to Italy and I would pay her back all my debts […].

The words of the oaths here are quite ambiguous and do not state the conditions clearly, but one can decipher from the two respondents that the most important and consistent statements of the whole ritual are the 'repayment of debts' and 'constant loyalty to the madam.'

4.11 How Do the Oaths Taken Ensure the Silence of Edo Transnational Sex Workers? Syncretism among the Benin People

Agazue (2013) stresses that for many organized criminals who have little or no business with the doctrines of the new religions, juju oaths form part of their initiation procedures. Those in the diaspora are not left out as Africans are fond of upholding their popular cultures. In contemporary Benin society, although there is a proliferation of churches and Christianity has become widely accepted, the practice of traditional religion is also upheld. This implies a fusion of both religious principles, which underscores some sort of interface between them (Van Dijk 1999).

In an observation of the religious proceedings of an Ayelala temple in Oluku, Benin City, findings revealed a high level of syncretism in the worship. These areas are:

The dress code: Worshippers wear red robes adorned with three white crosses, while the priest also wore robes with a hat that is quite similar in appearance to the Pope's skullcap.

Words: During worship, words like "Praise the Lord" and Christian songs and worship are also used. Inner chambers inhabited by deities had a separate entrance embellished with palm fronds. In the section of the temple where oaths are sworn, there are markings of the cross. The Ayelala priest had a

justice of peace title, signalling the fact that, at some point, he had embarked on a spiritual pilgrimage to Israel, the centre of Christianity (Carling 2005).

It is therefore logical to argue that sex workers who were not active adherents of traditional religion, or who claimed to be Christians, believe in the potency of the oaths and the ramifications of its power. As Ikeora (2016) maintains, empirical data show that while juju can be used in the context of trafficking, it is actually the use of traditional oath taking that is dominant. The powers of the oaths are not realized until there is a default on the part of the sex worker. As a result of exposure to traditional religion and belief systems, the sex worker therefore tries to keep to the dictates of the oaths. Here, Ikeora (2010) asserts that it is not 'brainwashing', but rather abuse of the sex workers' beliefs.

4.11.1 Periodic Renewing of Oaths

Apart from the oaths taken in different temples in Benin City and other parts of Edo State before the sex workers embarked on their journey, the research revealed that on arrival in destinations across European, the sex workers, confronted with the reality of the job, sometimes try to either default on payments or seek alternative means of reducing the amount of the debt. It is at this stage that madams employ the use of physical violence and threats, especially on girls who do not perform or bring expected remittances on a daily basis to the madams. Physical violence and threats are employed by the madams to ensure the 'loyalty' of the girl. Where the strategy fails to yield any positive results, the madam goes on to seek the help of the juju priest who performed the oath-taking ritual in Benin. In an interview with a juju priest in Ikpoba-Okha area of Benin, the priest revealed that:

> Any madam who seeks my services concerning oath taking for girls to travel for sex work has to pay for each girl that takes the oath. Future expense is added to this amount because some of these girls, when they get overseas and begin to enjoy the life there, they might decide to run away from their madam. If the madam tries to stop them and fails, she then calls on me to help. What I do is to use the contents of the packet of the particular sex workers to make a concoction and then remind the gods of the vows she took to 'repay' the debts. What happens afterwards is that the girl in question would dream of the oath-taking ritual performed before her trip to Europe and then the gods would appear to her. This would serve as a reminder not to break the promise she made. If, after a while, the madam

still complains of non-compliance of the girl, then the ultimate punishment is invoked on the sex worker. The punishment depends on the oaths they had taken before, ranging from madness to grave illness of the sex worker or of loved relations (especially parents).

A respondent corroborated the previous testimony:

> When I got to Italy, I was shocked at how demanding the job was. I was required to work every night and [I was] 'on call' without leave of absence even when I fell sick. Sometimes, I get intimate with up to fifteen men daily. The most painful part of it was the fact that the money was coming in 'trickles'. I had been made to believe that I would make a lot of money when I got to Europe, but at best I made 200 to 300 euros per day under the worst working conditions ever. I decided to approach my madam to complain; when I did, she did not take it easy on me. In fact, she threatened 'fire and brimstone'. One day, I refused to go to work because I needed to rest. I was given the beating of my life by my madam and the other girls under her, as is the custom. I decided to devise a way of moving away to a friends' place in another city. The night I left, nothing happened. The following night, I had a terrible nightmare where I saw the deities from the shrine where I took the oath in Benin chasing me with machetes. The dream was so vivid that my friend confirmed that I was screaming and thrashing about the bed […] after relaying the dream to my friend, she advised me to go back to my madam and plead for forgiveness as the oath I took was strong enough to become catastrophic if I defaulted. I decided to go back; when I got to my madam's place, I learnt from the other girls that my madam had called the juju priest back home in Benin and notified him of my actions, it was at that point that the priest decided to 'warn' me, hence the 'nightmare'. It was then I realized I was 'trapped' in the job and resigned myself to its demands [...].

The oath-taking ritual is not a final process in itself, as the testimony implies. The end goal is for the payment of the debt to be complete and then the sex worker can be 'relieved' of her duties. Any defiance is met with consequences, especially if it involves default.

In other instances, madams also arrange for the 'fortification' of their girls so that they can always receive favour and become the epitome of attraction for men in Europe and 'clients' in general.

A respondent had this to say:

> I was already with my madam for more than a year. We were eight girls under her at that time; then my madam began complaining that our 'delivery' was becoming too small, every one of us had one excuse or the other, ranging from the economy in Italy and how it affected our work to how clients prefer slimmer girls […] she then put a call in to a Nigerian juju priest who she asked to send some 'favour packets' down; we got the packages and followed the instructions for use, which involved making some incisions in our pubic region. Things changed tremendously in terms of patronage after that.

This periodic renewal of the oaths reinforces the significance of 'silence' to the network as it aims to put them in check if the question of default crosses their minds. It also speaks to the theory of 'abstract phenomena', utilized in this study, i.e. that the beliefs of the sex workers can be manipulated to a point where, throughout their transnational movement, it becomes translated into silence, which ultimately leads to their exploitation.

4.11.2 'Perceived' Consequences of Default

Carling (2005) contends that the oaths taken are regarded as sacred by the victims. This also underscores the beliefs of the sex workers who regard the ritual as binding and therefore abide by its dictates, wherever they find themselves (UNICRI 2010).

A respondent told me:

> When I was taken away from the camp by my madam, she asked me to rest and then told me we were going out in the night. As we were driving along the streets at night, we came across different sets of sex workers who were looking for 'clients' on the streets. She then told me I would make a good sex worker as I had the 'required' weight and was attractive enough. As we were driving down, we came across a girl, who, from the way she spoke, was a Benin girl; she stopped and greeted my madam who had pointed her out to me. From the way she carried herself and talked, I guessed there was something wrong with her. Then my madam told me that she was once her 'girl' but she decided to 'run' away defying the oaths. After many warnings from my madam and the juju priest, she came back for a while and then suddenly ran away again. After a while, my madam said she was forced

> to alert the juju priest to invite the ultimate punishment on her. This was done and, ever since, the girl had been observed roaming the streets. I was shivering at the end of the discussion because I had seen with my own eyes what breaking the oath can cause.

In the course of the research, another constant theme that all the interviewed returnee sex workers talked about was what happened to defaulters. One can only imagine that the madams encourage the spread of these stories in order to breed fear among new arrivals and thus manipulate them into being 'obedient' workers (Garcia 2013).

A respondent relayed one of the stories that struck her:

> I heard of a girl who had run away to Spain from Italy. She had told other girls that she didn't think the oath would have any effect on her now that she was in Italy. After a while, she was found dead in Spain. The authorities had pinned her death on an overdose, but we all knew that she had died mysteriously because she ran away.

These stories were spread by the madams themselves. The nature of their origin, whether fictional or not, cannot be ascertained, but the result is to instil fear in the minds of new arrivals (Cherti et. al. 2013; Pascoal 2012), who might want to default when faced with the demands and the reality of the 'job'. Other narratives revealed that when the madam who needed the daily returns from the sex worker to continue but the sex worker was proving difficult, other strategies were employed.

A respondent confirmed that:

> I was on the verge of running away and my madam sensed it because we were always having quarrels where she threatened me and sometimes beat me up. My plan was to run away with a particular client who was willing to take me with him to the United States and marry me. That morning, my madam had warned me severely to be obedient or something terrible might happen to my mother back home. I didn't care; I thought she meant that the terrible incident would actually happen to me, which would then affect my mother greatly. It was early evening when I learnt that my mother was involved in a ghastly accident and was struggling to even breathe at the hospital. Immediately, I remembered what my madam had told me in the morning and it all struck me: my mother's life was in my hands. If I decided to run away, she would definitely die, so I decided to remain and complete

> the payments in spite the unfavourable working conditions. My mother did not die that time and I realized how my actions would have killed her.

For this sex worker, the desire to run away had been squashed by the 'accident', which could also have been a coincidence. Other examples of default stories as told by returnees, but deliberately spread by the madams, included cases concerning 'summoning'. This is the use of Ayelala temples and priests to summon the sex workers or their relatives.

For example, one respondent relayed that:

> I heard that my madam had summoned one of her former girls who refused to pay the agreed amount. Madam had contacted someone back home in Benin who took the case to the Ayelala temple. It was there that the mother of the sex worker was summoned, the mother then got in touch with the sex worker to inform her of what happened and also encourage her not to default on the agreement of the oath.

Another respondent said:

> Haa! We heard a lot of stories about Ayelala oh! We are all scared of an Ayelala summons and anyone who gets summoned has to be careful not to lose his/her life. I cannot forget the story of a girl who left her madam and was summoned but still did not heed the summons. We heard that her stomach swelled and swelled till it exploded and she lost her life.

The prevalence of Ayelala temples in Benin City today makes it quite easy for madams to elicit help from them (Simoni 2013), and since Ayelala is known for delivering justice, people seeking justice, irrespective of the morality of their 'engagements', can easily find it there.

Plambech (2014) identifies all of the above as reasons why the majority of victims are willing to cooperate in the destination countries. This, in turn, speaks to the transnationalism of silence, as argued in this research.

5 Summary of Findings and Conclusion

5.1 Summary of findings

From the data analysis, some major themes emerged, including: the functions of members of the sex work network; the significant role of oath taking in the network; the implications of the 'transnationalism of silence' on the political economy of Edo transnational sex work; the concept of sex work to sex workers and the Edo community; the oath-taking ritual and processes involved; and issues on defaulting and the maintaining of the sex work industry in Edo State.

Each participant, as the research outlined, played a significant role in the running of the network and their roles have become part of the accepted practice that has kept the network out of the reach of law enforcement agencies, despite their transnational movements. It also sets them apart from other sex networks in Europe. For each group in the network, their functions goes beyond assigned duties as they take on other duties as and when required. This factor has contributed significantly to the growth of the network.

Oath taking plays a major role in the transnational sex work network in Edo State. It begins from the moment the potential sex worker agrees to the idea of travelling to Europe with the network and moves with them throughout the period of sojourn until they are relieved of their duty or deported back home. The oaths may need to be reinforced in some cases to renew their efficacy, but the result is that the network relies on the oaths and the transnational silence they breed to ensure the sex workers' compliance to the status quo. The implication of this to all categories of sex workers, as outlined in the findings, suggests that the 'hold' the oaths have on the sex workers is of varying degrees.

The culture of different modes of moving silences is a major factor that complements the oaths taken and ultimately leads to the success of the network. The study observed that the culture of 'transnationalism of silence' operated by the network is as effective as the oaths taken in the sustenance of the sex work industry in Edo State. Hence these silences are encouraged

by the network and they form part of the wording of the oaths. An abstract quality, such as the oaths taken in temples back in Benin, develops into different forms of silences depending on the mobility of those who embody it. It is powerful enough to keep them under control, even when things are not going according plan. These silences take different forms and begin from the point of recruitment, and then, even when faced with deportation, they still move with the sex workers back home, which is a problem for anti-trafficking agents seeking to prosecute members of the network. The realization that the efficacy of the oaths is transferred to the level of silence the sex worker maintains when faced with deportation or other grave consequences makes the network encourage the 'transnationalism of silence' in its operations.

The research also explored the perception of sex work among different groups in Edo State. Beginning from the inexperienced sex worker to the initiator, sex work meant different things to different categories of sex workers and an understanding of its meaning gives clarity to outsiders to the practice. The evolving culture of acceptance of the sex work phenomena by different groups in the state has gross implications for the security of young girls in Edo State.

The oath-taking ritual examined in this study highlighted different aspects of the ritual and their significance. From the collection and packaging of items bearing the names of the sex worker, to the slaughtering of animals for the ritual, and the wordings of the oaths taken, every part of it gave the network the boldness to operate and demand compliance. The temples where the rituals are performed also reinforce feelings of fear in the sex workers that remain with them wherever they may go. The study also focused on the periodic renewal of oaths and how strategic this is in keeping errant sex workers in check. The significance of the oaths became so important that, as the study observed, NAPTIP officials had to begin conducting oath-breaking rituals to convince returnee sex workers that the oaths were no longer binding. This also speaks to the issue of the belief system of sex workers.

The study also sought to highlight and seek explanation for different categories of would-be defaulters in the industry. Findings reveal that a combination of the oaths taken, silences in the network, and the general lifestyle lived in Europe as sex workers combine to make default minimal in the operations of Edo transnational sex work. From the orientation exercise of newly arrived sex workers to stories being told and retold in the network, the fear of running away and its eventual consequences are passed on to new recruits. Other factors highlighted in the study include dreams and visions of deities caused

by juju priests, who are signalled by madams who feel that a particular sex worker is planning to default on the agreement. Other techniques employed to distract sex workers from default include summoning by Ayelala temples, which, if not responded to appropriately by the sex worker, are believed to lead to the death of the sex worker or that of a loved one. In sum, the sustaining of the transnational sex work industry is the result of many factors that remotely involve the economic reality in the state, the evolving culture of acceptance of the job description in Edo State because of the economic gains and status it accords, and the beliefs of the people.

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Appendix



Photo 1

The researcher and NAPTIP Area Commander, Mr. Nduka



Photo 2

Traditional Benin artwork at the Prince's residence



Photo 3

The researcher and the great-grandson of Oba Ovaramwen Nogbaisi, Prince Oransaye



Photo 4

A juju priest at the temple in Benin City



Photo 5

The researcher with a juju priest at the temple in Benin City

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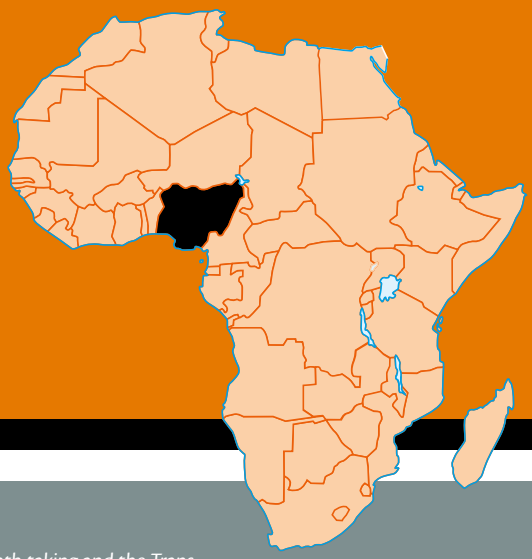
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This book is based on Cynthia A. Olufade's Master's thesis '*Oath taking and the Trans-nationalism of Silence among Edo Female Sex Workers in Italy*', winner of the African Studies Centre, Leiden's 2018 Africa Thesis Award. This annual award for Master's students encourages student research and writing on Africa and promotes the study of African cultures and societies.

This study aimed to interrogate the oath taking phenomena among Edo female sex workers in Italy. In a bid to understand how the oaths taken in Edo State, translates into an intangible as pect of the trafficking process. To achieve the aims of the study, the research utilised the qualitative method of data collection, it involved the use of in-depth interviews and observations. The study reveals that the transnational silence exhibited by different categories of actors in the Edo sex work network sustains the industry. The research also highlights that the oaths form only a part, albeit important of the construction of debt and bondage in the context of Edo transnational sex work. In light of its findings, the study concludes that the idea of transnationalism of silence is as effective as the oaths taken.

Cynthia Olufade is a research consultant on trafficking for sexual purposes. Her research interests include, gender related research, migration and transnationalism, religion and ethnicity. She is a mother of two and happily married to Ayodele Olufade.

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