

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

**COERCED, INDEBTED AND INDENTURED SEX SLAVES:
REPRESENTATIONS OF SEX SLAVERY IN CHINWUBA'S
MERCHANTS OF FLESH (2003) AND SANUSI'S *EYO* (2009)**



FRANCIS OFFEN

2023



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

COERCED, INDEBTED AND INDENTURED SEX SLAVES:
REPRESENTATIONS OF SEX SLAVERY IN CHINWUBA'S
MERCHANTS OF FLESH (2003) AND SANUSI'S *EYO* (2009)

BY

FRANCIS OFFEN

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH,
FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST, IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY DEGREE IN LITERATURE-IN-
ENGLISH

NOVEMBER, 2023

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature Date

Name: Francis Offen

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on the supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature Date

Name: Dr. Daniel Oppong-Adjei

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study analyses two West African novels to examine sex slavery's new dimensions as depicted in prosaic works by Third-Generation female West African writers. Using Bales' *Theory of Slavery Forms* (2009) and Weissbrodt's *Classifications of Slavery* (2002), it categorises sex slavery as coerced, indebted, and indentured through Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). The findings identify demand variables—purchasers, exploiters, state and culture—and show variations in sex slavery representations across paradigms and modes. It concludes with a recommendation for further exploration on the male and female authorial voices on sex slavery in African literature from a post-colonial standpoint.

KEYWORDS

Demand

Sex slavery

Slavery

“Third-generation” female writers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Daniel Oppong-Adjei, my esteemed supervisor, for all the guidance, support and instruction he provided me throughout my Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) research. I would like to thank the Faculty of Arts at the University of Cape Coast for providing me with the resources to pursue graduate study in the Department of English.

In addition, I would like to thank Prof. J. B. A. Afful (Former Head of the Department of English), Prof. Mousa Traore, Dr. Rogers Asempasah, Prof. Kwadjo Opoku Agyemang, Prof. Kwabena Sarfo Sarfo-Kantankah, Dr. Samuel Kwesi Nkansah and Dr. Isaac Mwinlaru, whose invaluable feedback greatly influenced how I conducted my research. Dr. Theresa Addai-Mununkum, Dr. Christabel Aba-Sam, Dr. Lena Awoonor-Aziaku and Dr. Hannah Ammisah-Arthur have been incredible mentors, and I am also grateful to them. Mr. Mark Abbey, Mr. Samuel Arthur, Mr. Emmanuel Owusu, Mr. Christopher Lekey, Mr. Alfred Okrah, Mr. Samuel Ato Bentum and Mr. Bertrand Ablekemah, and all colleagues of the M.Phil. English 2020 classes are all appreciated for the fun times we had working and socialising together.

Further, I am grateful to my uncle, Mr. Johnson Adjei-Frimpong, for his financial support during my college days. Many thanks to my sisters, Ruth Naana Offen and Abigail Ama Serwa Offen, and my siblings—Shulammitte Adwoa Ohenewa Koomson and Perpetual Kakra Lekey—for their love, support and encouragement. Finally, I appreciate the staff and pupils at Anapansu D/A Junior High School in Anapansu—Shama, who have been there for me emotionally and intellectually as I worked on my coursework.

DEDICATION

To my mother: Mrs. Mary Efua Nyarkoah Gyambrah Offen.

And in memory of my beloved dad: Mr. Ernest Akwasi Offen.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DECLARATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
KEYWORDS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
CHAPTER ONE	1
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Overview the Study	1
1.2 Background to the Study	1
1.3. Thesis Statement	4
1.4. Purpose of the Study	5
1.5. Objectives of the Study	5
1.6. Research Questions	6
1.7. Scope of the Study	6
1.8. Research Methodology	7
1.8.1. Research Design	7
1.8.2 Justification for Selection of Authors/Texts	7
1.9. Authors' Biographies	9
1.9.1. Abidemi Sanusi	9
1.9.2. Ifeoma Chinwuba	11
1.10. Significance of the Research	14

1.11. Organisation of the Research	15
CHAPTER TWO	16
2.0. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	16
2.1. Overview	16
2.2. Frameworks for the Study	16
2.2.1. Conceptual Framework based on Bales' (2009) <i>Theory of Slavery Forms</i> and Weissbrodt's (2002) <i>Classifications of Slavery</i>	16
2.2.2. The meaning of slavery	18
2.2.3. Old" and Contemporary Forms of Slavery	22
2.2.4. Differentiating between "Old" and "Modern" Forms of Slavery	29
2.2.5. Characteristics that define Modern Slavery	30
2.3. Hughes' (2004; 2005) <i>Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking</i>	34
2.3.1. Components of <i>Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking</i> (2004; 2005)	37
2.4 Empirical Review	45
2.4.1 Introduction	45
2.4.2. Review of Selected Sex Slavery Studies on Chinwuba's <i>Merchants of Flesh</i> (2003), Sanusi's <i>Eyo</i> (2009) and West African travelogues.	45
2.4.3. Review of selected studies on Economic Model Theories on Sex Slavery	53
2.5. Summary of the Chapter	55
CHAPTER THREE	56
3.0. LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF SEX SLAVERY IN <i>MERCHANTS OF FLESH</i> (2003) AND <i>EYO</i> (2009)	56
3.1. Introduction	56
3.2. RQ.1. How is Sex Slavery Literary Portrayed in the Selected Texts?	56
3.2.1. Forced labour ['Coerced' sex slavery]	56

3.2.2. Debt bondage [‘Indebted’ sex slavery]	73
3.2.3 Contract slavery [‘Indentured’ sex slavery]	88
3.3 Chapter Summary	115
CHAPTER FOUR	116
4.0. THE DEMAND SIDE OF SEX TRAFFICKING THAT LEAD THE PRINCIPAL FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SEX SLAVERY IN CHINWUBA’S <i>MERCHANTS OF FLESH</i> (2003) AND SANUSI’S <i>EYO</i> (2009)	116
4.1. Introduction	116
4.2. R.Q. 2. How do Demand Factors of Sex Trafficking Contribute to the Recruitment and Incorporation of Female Characters into Sexual Slavery in the Selected Texts?	116
4.2.1. The purchasers/users/buyers	116
4.2.2. The profiteers/exploiters	127
4.2.3. The state	140
4.2.4. Culture	158
4.3. Summary of the Chapter	176
CHAPTER FIVE	177
5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	177
5.1 Overview	177
5.2 Summary	177
5.3. Key Findings	180
5.4 Conclusions	183
5.5 Recommendations	184
REFERENCES	186

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview the Study

This study investigates the literary depictions of sex slavery in 'Third-Generation' Nigerian female literature, specifically examining Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). It explores how demand variables in sex trafficking drive the recruitment and involvement of female protagonists, highlighting socio-economic and power dynamics perpetuating exploitation. Using qualitative textual analysis, the study addresses portrayals of sex slavery and demand factors in the selected texts. It adopts Bales' (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt's (2002) *Classification of Slavery*, and Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Demand Side Theory* for a comprehensive analysis of the literary depictions of sex slavery and the demand side of sex trafficking in the two Nigerian texts.

1.2 Background to the Study

Slavery has been in existence since ancient times and continues to exist in modern times. It is defined by various interpretations from scholars, such as a socially exploitative connection, an economically exploitative relationship, an imbalance of power, and the commodification of vulnerable persons by superiors (Bales, 2005; Brace, 2004; Perbi, 2004; Lovejoy, 2000). Slavery has taken on new connotations as it has evolved into different modern forms, but it is not as popular as it once was.

Scholars and researchers in the area of slavery have identified numerous types of slavery as well as its present development. Although there are some similarities between old and new forms of slavery, such as the asymmetrical

power dynamic between slaves and owners, and the economic exploitation and physical maltreatment of slaves. Both types of slavery have unique characteristics. Features such as globalisation, slave control, the economic worth of captives to slave owners, relationship span, and race and ethnicity problems serve as the basis for differentiating between “old” and “contemporary” forms of slavery (Bales, Trodd, & Williamson, 2009, p. 33).

In an age of globalisation, the influence of technology and science has particularly the creation of sophisticated and effective communication and transportation systems have accelerated the growth of human trafficking, the most recent iteration of slavery and one of the most lucrative criminal enterprises in the world after the trafficking of drugs and weapons (Bales, 2004 & Weissbrodt, 2002). The domestic and international slavery of individuals, particularly women and children, as a result of human trafficking, has recently been the subject of growing concerns and campaigns around the world. The widespread awareness of the unlawful operations of human trafficking gangs in recent years is credited to the plethora of clarion calls and campaigns that some female writers are now supporting globally.

Consequently, the “modern” or “contemporary” version of slavery is lucrative because the victims of trafficking give their traffickers significant amounts of money (Patterson & Zhuo, 2018). Then, there is the enduring question of why the prohibited practice of human slavery persists. Owing to the aforesaid query, scholars (Bales, 2005; Bales, 2004; Bales, 2005; Brace, 2004; Perbi, 2004 & Weissbrodt, 2002) suggest that the affiliation of traffickers with highly specialised, covert and networked organisations makes it challenging to find and prosecute them.

Slavery in the form of sex is another kind of human trafficking that ends in exploitation and pays well for the traffickers while putting the victims in danger of physical issues as well as emotional issues and mental diseases brought on by sadomasochistic customers and pimps (Slavery, 2022). The horrific practice of sex slavery is characterised by the trafficking of people, particularly women and girls, and the placement of those people in commercial sex marketplaces (Kara, 2009; Bales, 2009; Hughes, 2005 & Weissbrodt, 2002). Bales (2009); Kara (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002) stipulate that sex slavery is one of the fastest-growing sectors of modern slavery as a result of the impacts of economic globalisation, war and relocation. Scholars such as: Bales (2009); Kara (2009) and Patterson & Zhuo (2018) emphasise that human “sex” trafficking is prevalent in Africa. Africa’s reputation as a hub for trafficking is inimical. A number of studies (Kara, 2009; Bales, 2009; Hughes, 2005; Weissbrodt, 2002) have shown that a significant number of victims of sex slavery—mostly women and children—enter the commercial world, particularly the commercial sex industry.

In recent years, female writers all over the world have become increasingly interested in the operations of these traffickers—operations which have increased the participation of black women in sex enslavement in Africa and Europe. As a result, several passionate “negofeminist” African female authors, that is, “third-generation” West African writers, have raised the consciousness of this heinous practice (sex trafficking), mostly through writings referred to as “migratory” or “neo-sex slavery” narratives. Amma Darko, Yaa Gyasi, Unoma Azuah, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chika Unigwe, Akachi Adimora-Eziegbo, Adaobi Tricia Nwaubani, Sade Adeniran, Sarah Ladipo Manyika, Sefi Atta,

Ifeoma Chinwuba, and Abidemi Sanusi are a few examples of “third-generation” West African female writers whose works centre on “neo-sex slavery.” These “third-generation” West African women authors discuss national concerns in their narratives, including the way those concerns positively or negatively impact the development of women and children. The migratory narratives of “third-generation” West African female authors frequently emphasise issues like domestic and transnational sex slavery, which primarily impacts negatively on women and children from their native countries and other areas of Africa. Again, the “third-generation” of West African female authors’ writings provide greater details about the factors that increase the domestic and transnational demand for sex-trafficked victims.

It is in this context that I extrapolate the representations of sex slavery in two contemporary “third-generation” West African “sex trafficking” novels, namely *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) by Ifeoma Chinwuba and *Eyo* (2009) by Abidemi Sanusi. The framework for extrapolating sex slavery forms is based on the *Theory of Slavery Forms* by Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt’s (2002) *Classification of Slavery* in the United Nations Report on *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary*. In addition, Hughes’ *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* (2004; 2005) is utilised to explore how demand factors of sex trafficking drive the female protagonists in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009) into domestic and transnational [coerced, indebted or indentured] sex slavery.

1.3. Thesis Statement

This study investigates the representations of sex slavery in ‘third-generation’ Nigerian female literature, specifically examining Chinwuba’s

Merchants of Flesh (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). It assesses how demand variables in sex trafficking lead to the recruitment and involvement of the novels' female protagonists in sex slavery.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyse the depiction of sex slavery in 'third-generation' Nigerian female literature, specifically through the works of Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). This research seeks to uncover how demand variables in sex trafficking influence the recruitment and involvement of female protagonists in sex slavery, and to highlight the socio-economic and power dynamics that perpetuate sexual exploitation.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

Sex slavery persists as a profound and entrenched issue in West Africa, rooted in socio-economic inequalities and imbalances of power, particularly within the context of globalisation. It is perpetuated by factors such as poverty, lack of education, systemic gender inequities and exploitative practices in socio-economic systems. This study aims to explore an under-researched dimension of sexual slavery, offering nuanced analysis, and is guided by the following objectives:

- i. Exploring the literary depictions of sex slavery, highlighting the thematic concerns used in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009).
- ii. Analysing the demand factors of sex trafficking that perpetuate sex slavery, as portrayed in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009).

1.6. Research Questions

In examining the literary depictions of sex slavery and the demand factors that perpetuate it, this study is guided by the following research questions:

- i. How is sex slavery portrayed in the selected texts?
- ii. In what ways do the demand factors of sex trafficking depicted in the chosen texts drive the recruitment and engagement of the principal female characters into sex slavery?

1.7. Scope of the Study

The study critically examines the literary representations of sex slavery in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009), selected for their significant portrayal of sex trafficking, providing a basis for in-depth analysis. It analyses how the framework developed from Bales' (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt's (2002) *Classifications of Slavery* applies to the depictions of sex slavery in the selected texts, with a focus on these specific theories to provide a structured approach to understanding the complexities of sex slavery as portrayed in the literature. The investigation delves into the demand factors of sex trafficking as outlined in Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*, examining how these factors influence the recruitment and involvement of the female protagonists in sex slavery within the selected texts. Additionally, the study contextualises the vulnerability of black women to sex trafficking within the broader framework of globalisation, examining the impact of globalisation on the socio-economic and power dynamics in the selected works.

1.8. Research Methodology

1.8.1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative textual analysis design to analyse the selected African texts. The qualitative design is chosen because it allows the researcher to develop open-ended research questions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, qualitative research design, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018), is appropriate for textual analysis, making it an appropriate technique for this study. Finally, once it comes to the analysis of themes and patterns, the qualitative research design is regarded as the most valuable (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As a result, the qualitative research design is considered for use in this study.

1.8.2 Justification for Selection of Authors/Texts

The chosen authors are “third-generation” writers who continue to gain international critical acclaim for their work on a variety of serious Nigerian concerns (Nadaswaran, 2013, p. 110). In Nadaswaran’s (2013) study on chosen “third-generation” Nigerian female authors, it is stated that taboo issues such as sex, female sexuality and rape, as well as exposing Nigeria’s socio-cultural confinements, are predominantly discussed (p. 110). This style of writing is used by the “third-generation” Nigerian authors and gives young Nigerian women other options (Nadaswaran, 2013, p. 110). Ifeoma Chinwuba and Abidemi Sanusi are considered among a host of “third-generation” Nigerian women writers as their prize-winning novels create models for modern Nigerian women to reconstruct their lives societies constructed on male-friendly ideologies. Regarding sex slavery, Ifeoma Chinwuba and Abidemi Sanusi are attracting much attention concerning the domestic and transnational

exploitation of black women. In using both young and mature female characters, the selected novelists show that their texts are far from disconsolate texts, portraying female characters interested in their development. For this study, Ifeoma Chinwuba and Abidemi Sanusi, two Nigerian female writers from the “third generation,” are chosen.

The two selected texts provide illustrations of the events that lead to the recruitment of black women into sex slavery (Nadaswaran, 2013, p. 110). As such, this study sets out to examine the representations of sex slavery and the demand factors of sex trafficking that contribute to the enlistment of African women or girls into sex slavery (be it domestically or transnationally) in “third-generation” Nigerian female fiction. Thus, the re-reading of the selected texts details the complexities of African women or girls who travel or are trafficked to Europe to “sell” their bodies. These are women who, because of factors of demand in the capitalist system, find themselves trapped in the horrors of human sex trafficking, irrespective of their will.

The plot progression in the selected Nigerian “bildungsromans” and its association with the effects of factors of demand on the female characters serve as the primary criteria for the selection of the texts. The research considers the selection of a framework based on Bales’ (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt’s (2002) Classification of Slavery together with Hughes’s (2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*. The chosen frameworks aid in showing the representations of sex slavery and how the factors of demand violate, destroy and change the lives of the female characters in Chinwuba’s *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi’s *Eyo* (2009). The frameworks also provide analyses that underscore the prevalence of sexual slavery as highlighted

by 'third generation' Nigerian female novelists and the urgent need to address these issues in contemporary discourse.

1.9. Authors' Biographies

1.9.1. Abidemi Sanusi

Abidemi Sanusi was born in Nigeria and moved to the United Kingdom when she was a teenager. She received her education in England, where she attended Leeds University. Sanusi, a former human rights advocate, now manages a website for authors. She writes both fictional and Christian works. Abidemi Sanusi is the author of numerous energising works of Christian fiction, such as *Women Every Day* and *Day by Day with God. Kemi's Journal* (2005) and *God Too Has Daughters* (2006). She also authored *Zack's Story* (2006). Her most recent publication is *Looking for Bono* (2020). Abidemi Sanusi's fourth novel—*Eyo* (2009), propelled her towards Commonwealth recognition in 2010 (Sanusi, 2009, back-cover).

The novel *Eyo* (2009) examines child trafficking and sex slavery from the perspective of numerous children brought to Europe illegally each year. Eyo, an illiterate 10-year-old girl, is promised work, education and wealth by her father but is trafficked to the UK instead. Her five-year ordeal begins with domestic servitude and escalates to child sex slavery. Eventually, she is freed by a Catholic priest and a nun and sent back to Nigeria. Even in a free society, there is a price demanded from those it is meant to protect.

In the Ajegunle slum of Lagos, Nigeria, Eyo and her brother Lanre sell iced water according to the book's first section, *African Flower*. Residents of Jungle City describe the days and nights as being brutal. Steel nerves are needed for survival. Eyo fights off small-time criminals, child molesters and a lusty

landlord. With the knowledge of her mother, Wade harasses Eyo sexually. To avoid Wade from raping Sade continually, Eyo agrees to become her father's sexual object. Due to his financial situation, Wade requests that Femi takes Eyo out of Jungle City. Wealth has accrued for Uncle Femi, a human trafficker from Jungle City. In exchange for good education, a lucrative job and a fortune, he [Femi] consents to take Eyo to London.

When Eyo arrives in London, a couple "buys" her to look after their kids. She is "imprisoned" in the house all day and made to perform household duties. Eyo puts in a lot of effort but is attacked at the slightest excuse. After learning about her abilities, Sam, the man of the house, quickly starts molesting her. He then starts acting like a pimp. Eyo gets pregnant and miscarries, so the couple "sells" her to Big Mama. Big Mama benefits from Eyo during her time in her (Big Mama's) house. Big Mama's preferred sex partner and source of income is Eyo, who deals with both commercial sex and sex slavery as presented in another chapter of the novel—*African Lolita*. Eyo brings Big Mama gifts and fees, but she only receives rationed food. Eyo has to carry out Big Mama's instructions. Big Madame Stella hands Eyo over to Johnny, another pimp, out of fear that her customers will set her free. Every time Eyo disobeys, Johnny, who is obnoxious and violent, terrorises her. As retaliation for short-changing Johnny, Eyo is used for gang and animal pornography. She gives up on earlier commitments and becomes helpless, doubting her humanity. "Jungle Girl" becomes her new name after rejecting the name Eyo.

Father Stephen and Sister Mary, who have made their lives work as dedicated to saving street girls like Eyo, chance upon her [Eyo] at the sanctuary. Once Eyo sought safety at the sanctuary, the two finally found her. With Nike's

(a lawyer's) support, Eyo rediscovers who she is and starts to heal. Nike is also committed to bringing charges against the violators. On the other side of events, Nike is shocked to discover how difficult it is to destroy the trade's underground network (Sanusi, 2009).

1.9.2. Ifeoma Chinwuba

Ifeoma Chinwuba was born in Nnewi, Anambra State, Nigeria, on November 15, 1960. She has a Bachelor of Arts with Honours in French from the University of Benin and a Master of Science in Political Science from the University of Lagos, Akoka. Since 1983, Chinwuba has served in the Foreign Affairs Service of Nigeria.

She began her life's journey as a child refugee and later became an ambassador. Chinwuba was in Nigeria during the Biafran War. She was required to remain at home until the end of the war, after which she returned to school to study the classical literature. Following her graduation, she was recruited to join the Nigerian Foreign Service. As a diplomat, she visited over sixty different nations. The author says that, in hindsight, she considers her travels as field trips she was destined to take. Chinwuba's travels allowed her to encounter cultures and civilizations in a manner comparable to that of a botanist observing species in the wild. Chinwuba attributes her writing prowess to adults who entertained her and other children with tales of yore in the absence of electricity and technology while simultaneously inculcating culture and proper behaviour.

Ifeoma Chinwuba, a retired civil servant, served as writer-in-residence at the University of Alberta in Canada during the 2021–2022 academic year. She has written five books, including novels, poetry in dialogue, and a juvenile

novella. Her novels include *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), a novel that placed first for the Prose Prize award of the Association of Nigerian Authors, ANA (2004); *Fearless* (2004) and *Waiting for Maria* (2007), which both won the Prose Prizes of the Association of Nigerian Authors, ANA (2008) and was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa) in 2008. She also wrote *African Romance* (2013). In 2017, she was given the National Order of Cote d'Ivoire for her work as Nigeria's ambassador in Cote d'Ivoire. Chinwuba's recent novella is *Head Boy* (2019) (Chinwuba, 2003, back-cover).

Merchants of Flesh (2003), which is a twenty-three-chapter travelogue comprising a prologue and epilogue, is Ifeoma Chinwuba's first literary masterpiece. Faith Moses who becomes the victim of Lizzy Johnson and other characters' systematic abuse, is the protagonist of the novel. The novel takes the reader into the imaginary life of Faith Moses. Faith is an undergraduate who has hopes of becoming influential, but her dream is terminated by fate when her father is killed in a tragic car accident. As a result, Faith Moses drops out of school immediately due to a lack of support. As a means of subsistence, she obtains a position as a cleaner in a third-rated clinic where she occasionally assists in the performance of abortion services. She remains in this position until she meets Lizzy Johnson, a human trafficker who promises her work as a fruit picker on farms or in an upscale Italian restaurant. Lizzy Johnson, on the other hand, has malicious intentions. To become a legitimate member of the largest Nigerian prostitution club in Italy, Best Sisters International Social Club, Lizzy needs only to recruit a group of Bini girls to be trafficked abroad. Faith Moses and the Bini girls are persuaded by Lizzy Johnson's false promises of greener pastures abroad to relocate from Nigeria to Italy. When Faith Moses and the

other girls arrive in Italy, a group of enslaved women welcome them. Lizzy Johnson uses contractual means to force Faith Moses and the other girls into sex slavery.

In response to Faith Moses signing her forced prostitution contract, Lizzy Johnson asks one of her girls, Lovett, to accompany Faith Moses throughout Italy on errands. The cities are specific locations where Faith Moses would be pursuing her “body” business after all Africans and Nigerian prostitutes resume work following the Best Sisters International Social Club in Italy’s national strike. While running errands and sightseeing at the arena, Piazza Bra, the two friends are arrested by two Italian police officers for failing to produce their residence and travel documents. As retribution for being sent back to Nigeria, the two Italian police officers arrest Lovett and Faith Moses and transport them to the outskirts of Verona, where they rape each woman in turn.

Faith Moses becomes a sex slave henceforth. She masters the sex trade and as she describes it, discovers the cruel and treacherous nature of the oldest profession. She learns that Lizzy Johnson used improper accounting practices to hold her and the other women as sex slaves for as long as she desired. Faith Moses plans to revolt against Lizzy Johnson, her mistress. She calls the other sex slaves together and informs them of their mistress’ cruelty and deceit. The girls accept her proposal, with Lovett acting as the first rebel. After paying a portion of her debt to the madam, Lovett decides to run away with her new lover, Eduardo, but Lizzy Johnson quickly tracks her down and is suspected of killing Lovett. This angers the other girls, who then disobey Lizzy Johnson’s orders and initiate a strike-based rebellion.

Faith Moses is in imminent danger as a rebel leader. She seeks refuge in the community centre of a Roman Catholic sanctuary in Rimini. At the Roman Catholic sanctuary in Rimini, she encounters Don Amos Kepler—a soon-to-be ordained priest who has also trekked to the sanctuary to seek forgiveness from Don Lorenzo for violating the “no sexual relations” code for Catholic priests again. Faith Moses relates to Don Amos Kepler and Don Lorenzo her harrowing experiences as a sex slave and expresses her desire for assistance in regaining her freedom. Faith Moses is introduced to Mr. Okoroh, a dependable Nigerian diplomat whose superior, Mr. Ufot, routinely relieves him of additional responsibilities that require payment. Faith Moses discloses as much as she can about the Italian prostitutes with whom she is acquainted.

Mr. Okoroh’s investigations uncover additional partners in the predominantly Nigerian-run sex business in Milan and other Italian cities. Lizzy Johnson and the other Best Sisters International Social Club members are apprehended during Operation Freedom, and their sex slaves are released. The girls relocated to the sanctuary community centre after the arrest of the madams. Those who required treatment received it. Those who suffered from mental illness were returned to Nigeria. On the other hand, Don Lorenzo assisted sane former sex slaves in Italy in acquiring normal jobs. Faith Moses worked at the Rimini Community Centre as a social worker. She never gave up on earning money for the clinic she had planned to open back home (Chinwuba, 2003).

1.10. Significance of the Research

This study unravels the complexities of sex trafficking by emphasising the socio-economic, psychological and systemic factors at play. Integrating interdisciplinary theories and literary analysis, it focuses on:

- i. *Exposing hidden realities*: Uncover the socio-economic, psychological, and systemic factors behind sex trafficking.
- ii. *Bridging theory and practice*: Use interdisciplinary frameworks to connect literary portrayals with real-world exploitation.
- iii. *Theoretical insights*: Advance understanding of sex slavery by applying theories like Bales' (2009) on slavery forms and Weissbrodt's (2002) classifications, and Hughes' (2004; 2005) demand factors of sex trafficking to literature.
- iv. *Literary Contribution*: Enrich African literature scholarship by exploring themes of coerced labour and migration within gender and exploitation contexts.

1.11. Organisation of the Research

This dissertation comprises five chapters. The first introduces the study, addressing its background, authors' biographies, thesis statement, purpose, research questions, scope, methodology, and significance. The second chapter reviews relevant literature, discussing key concepts from prior research. The third examines the literary depictions of sex slavery in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009), focusing on thematic concerns and narrative techniques used to portray its complexities. The fourth analyses the demand factors of sex trafficking, highlighting socio-economic dynamics influencing the narratives. The fifth concludes with a summary, recommendations, and suggestions for future research. The next chapter presents a review of literature pertinent to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Overview

This chapter comprises literature related to the study's frameworks and empirical articles related to the two selected African texts. The first framework is conceptual and its review deals with the definitions of slavery, forms of slavery ("old" and "modern" forms), differences between the "old" and "modern" forms of slavery and the defining characteristics of "modern" slavery. The second framework is theoretical and its review is also composed of discussions on Hughes' (2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*. In the empirical review section, selected articles on the texts—*Merchants of Flesh* (2003) by Ifeoma Chinwuba and *Eyo* (2009) by Abidemi Sanusi—are discussed for gap identification for this thesis. The final section of this chapter is the summary.

2.2. Frameworks for the Study

2.2.1. Conceptual Framework based on Bales' (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt's (2002) *Classifications of Slavery*

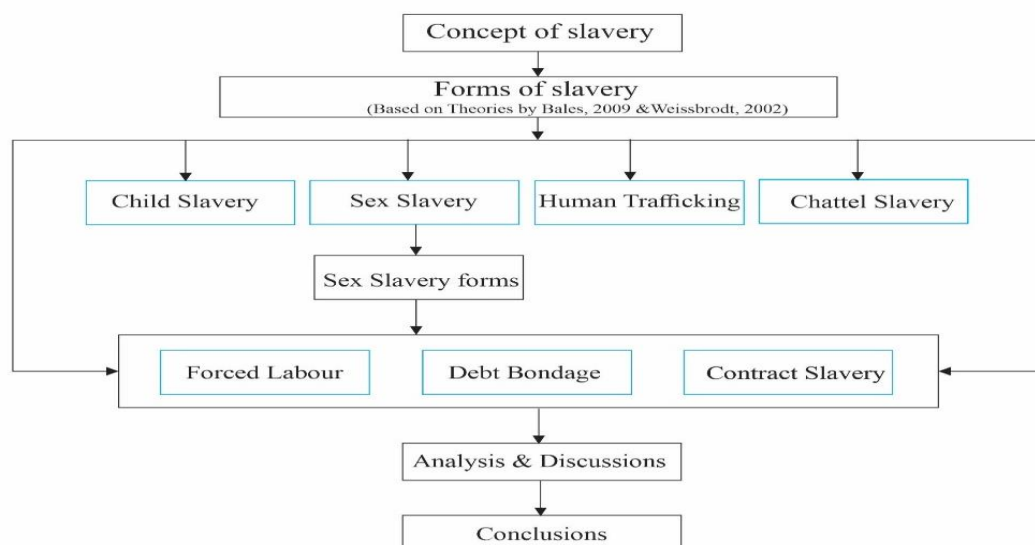


Figure 1. A conceptual framework developed from Bales' (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt's (2002) *Classifications of Slavery*.

The first framework for this study uses a diagram to analyse forms of sex slavery represented in selected texts, based on Bales' (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt's (2002) *Classifications of Slavery*. These conceptualised forms are drawn from the characteristics in Bales' and Weissbrodt's frameworks.

Bales (2009) identifies six main forms of slavery: chattel slavery, debt bondage, child slavery, forced labour, contract slavery, and sex slavery. Weissbrodt (2002) adds serfdom, human trafficking, child servitude, prostitution, migrant workers, forced marriages and the sale of wives. Both scholars note overlaps among slavery forms, leading to the merging of similar types in this study. For example, migrant workers are grouped with human trafficking and prostitution as forced labour, and forced marriage overlaps with several forms depending on the circumstances. This merging is due to shared characteristics like coercion and exploitation, making it logical to group them (Bales, 2009 & Weissbrodt, 2002). Understanding these overlaps helps identify root causes and systemic factors perpetuating slavery and aids in forming effective policies (Bales, 2009). It also allows for holistic support and interventions for victims experiencing multiple forms of slavery simultaneously (Bales, 2009 & Weissbrodt, 2002). As such, merging shows the interconnectedness of the slavery forms.

The study's holistic approach enriches understanding and highlights the need for multifaceted solutions. By examining merged forms like debt bondage, forced labour and contract slavery under sex slavery, the study provides a

nuanced analysis. This aligns with Bales' (2009) and Weissbrodt's (2002) theoretical frameworks, contributing to literary analysis by highlighting depictions of sex slavery as coerced, debt-bound and contract slavery.

The framework's implementation begins with defining slavery, followed by discussions on the old and modern forms based on Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002). The study then uses identified forms of sex slavery to analyse selected "third-generation" Nigerian female writings and answer the first research question.

2.2.2. The meaning of slavery

Researchers, academics and writers from all over the world have been interested in the idea of a precise definition of slavery or a slave. However, eminent scholars such as Bales, Brace, Petit, Lovejoy, Weissbrodt, Perbi, Robbins, Opoku-Agyemang and Lay, among others, use various but occasionally related trajectories to define "slavery" or "slave."

For instance, Perbi (2004) claims that the difficulty arises from the disparity between the native African experience of slavery and how it is conceptualised in the West. The Western understanding of slavery is summed up by Perbi (2004, p. 2), cited in Koomson (2010, p. 7) as follows: "First, the slave is a commodity; second, the slave is a chattel; third, the slave is inheritable; fourth, his or her progeny inherits the slave status, slavery is, therefore, perpetual and hereditary; fifth, the slave is a piece of property; and sixth, the slave is kinless, marginalised and an outsider." Lay (1985) (cited in Koomson, 2010, p. 1) refers to transatlantic slavery as "a notorious sin." The unfortunate victim, the African slave, is at the epicentre of this infamous sin. Likewise, Opoku-Agyemang (1996) unequivocally describes the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery as 'the

single most traumatic body of experience in all our known history' (p. 1), characterising it as an event that 'bristles with so much that is irredeemable evil' (p. 1)."

Since many "Slavs" (persons from Slavonia, in Europe) were captured and sold into slavery during early medieval wars, the word *slave* historically originates from the Old French *sclave*, which is derived from the Medieval Latin *sclavus* and the ethnonym *Slav* (Pipes, 1981, p. 32). Patterson (1982, p. 307) emphasises the association between slavery and the notion of permanent domination, where individuals are stripped of rights and liberties, reinforcing their status as property. Similarly, Klein (2013) highlights the dehumanisation inherent in slavery, particularly within the trans-Atlantic context, where the enslaved were subjected to labour and control at the discretion of their owners (p. 149- 163). Van Rossum (2021) expands on this by examining the adaptability of slavery across different regions and time periods, emphasising how informal and formal systems intersected to create complex regimes of domination (p. 570). Mende (2019) explores the enduring exploitation and dehumanisation that characterize both historical and modern forms of slavery, framing it within a human rights perspective (p. 235). Araujo (2020) underscores the importance of memory and representation in understanding slavery, particularly the systemic violence and loss of autonomy experienced by enslaved individuals (p. 112). Collectively, these scholars illustrate that slavery, whether old or modern, is defined by the complete subjugation of individuals, the denial of rights, and the exploitation of labour under coercive conditions.

Slavery existed in many places and at many times despite being regarded as inhuman (Patterson, 1982, p. 12). Slaves built the civilisations of the majority

of famous ancient nations, including Greece, Rome, and Egypt, as highlighted by Van Rossum (2021, p. 572) and Araujo (2020, p. 115). Abraham Lincoln (1854, p. 225) reaffirms that the selfishness of man (which is in opposition to his love of justice) is what gave rise to slavery. Brace (2004, p. 78) posits that slavery is an activity that turns people into commodities. Thus, as a result, slaves are seen as possessions that owners (slave masters) can own and sell. Similarly, Petit (2008, p. 112) states that slavery is a prime example of unfreedom partly because it results from both public and private dominance. Petit (2008) explains that *imperium* (state power) and *dominium* (private power) often work together, supported by societal norms and institutions, to maintain dominance (p. 112). In Petit's (2008, p. 115) opinion, sources of insulation may be found in the domain of the other, such as the government or civil society, if a particular instance of dominance is restricted to either an *imperium* or *dominium*.

Bales and Robbins (2001) contend that slavery as a social and economic relationship has never ceased to exist from the time of recorded history, but it is the form that it takes and its definition that has evolved and changed. Bales and Robbins (2001) postulate that it is challenging to “[generate] a universal definition of this relationship, one that is sufficiently dynamic to apply to a variety of historical and geographical settings” (p. 32). Bales and Robbins opine that slavery is “a state marked by the loss of free will where a person is forced through violence or the threat of violence to give up the ability to sell freely his or her labour power” (Bales and Robbins, 2001, p. 32). Based on Bales and Robbins' (2001) definition of slavery, the three variables that characterise slavery are: “control by another person, the appropriation of labour power and the use of threat of violence” (Bales and Robbins 2001, p. 32).

Regarding slavery, with emphasis on ownership, Bales and Robbins (2001), state that transatlantic slavery is a form of slavery, where “the owners of such slaves [have] the right to treat slaves as possessions, like livestock or furniture and to sell or transfer them to others” (p. 28). Slavery, thus, entails “the complete legal ownership of a person by another with the concomitant transformation of the slave into portable property” (Bales and Robbins, 2001, p. 32). This is the reason why the concept of ownership, in the opinions of Bales and Robbins (2001) has resulted in slaves sometimes called “chattels” (p. 28). They further postulate that “the economic exploitation and loss of free will that is inherent in slavery are often accomplished through the use or threat of violence, usually accompanied by ongoing abuse, and for that reason, violence also becomes a key identifying trait of slavery” (Bales and Robbins, 2001, p. 29).

Lovejoy (2000) thus agrees with Bales and Robins (2001) on the definition of slavery. Lovejoy (2000, p. 6), however, adds another dimension, that is, the issue of ownership of one’s sexuality and the fruits of one’s sexual reproduction. Lovejoy (2000) stipulates that slaves are denied the right to engage in sexual relationships or to marry without the consent of their masters. Their children, once slaves are permitted to have children, are not legally their offspring; the children are the property of the slave master, just as the puppies of a bitch belong to the owner of the pet. Koomson (2010, p. 7) notes that such children are often forcibly separated from their mothers, sometimes even before their first birthday.

Further, Lovejoy (2000) argues that slavery is a form of exploitation of one man by another man; in this context, the exploitation of one race by another

race. It is fundamentally a means of denying outsiders the rights and privileges of a particular society so that they (outsiders) can be exploited for economic, political or social purposes (Lovejoy, 2000, p. 5). Usually, outsiders are perceived as ethnically different; the absence of kinship is a particularly common distinction (Lovejoy, 2000, p. 5). In Lovejoy's (2000) opinion, differences in culture were relatively unimportant and the level of exploitation and the social isolation of slaves are usually limited. In Lovejoy's (2000) view, the most advanced forms of slavery are those in which slaves are taken far away from where they were born, making it clear that they are not from that area (p. 5).

The League of Nations Slavery Convention of September 25, 1926, proposed the first attempt to define slavery. This is cited in article 1, paragraph 1, of the United Nations report (2002) on *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary*. In the report, slavery is defined as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 4).

Slavery, in this study, is defined as a system of complete domination where individuals are deprived of freedom, reduced to property and exploited through violence, coercion or systemic abuse, upheld by societal and institutional support.

2.2.3. Old'' and Contemporary Forms of Slavery

There has never been a single type of slavery. There are several types of slavery, each with a name that describes what it means. Various forms of slavery exist in the world today. Weissbrodt (2002, p. 11) claims that the following slavery-related practices are included in the United Nations report (2002) on

Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary: serfdom, debt bondage, forced labour, child labour, prostitution, migration, human trafficking, forced marriages and sales of wives (p. 11- 46). Additionally, Bales (2009) theorises modern forms of slavery such as sex slavery, child slavery, contract slavery, forced labour, debt bondage and chattel slavery (p. 33). The forms of slavery listed below are those cited by Bales (2009, p. 33) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 11).

Chattel slavery: Chattel slavery is the form of slavery most similar to its original historical concept. It remains prevalent today, particularly in Northern and Western Africa. In this system, individuals are treated as property, meaning they can be bought, sold, captured, or forced into lifelong servitude (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 4). During the 16th to 18th centuries, American and European powers reinforced this system by imposing slave status on the children of enslaved individuals from birth, ensuring its perpetuation across generations (Bales, 2009, p. 33).

Debt bondage: Debt bondage is also known as bonded labour. It describes slavery in which an individual is compelled to work to repay a debt, but the length and nature of the service are not defined and their labour does not diminish the original debt. The work of the debtor may ostensibly be applied to the debt, but through false accounting or extortionate interest, repayment is forever out of reach. A person who is bound by an undefined loan from another individual, with the debt being transferable to future generations. In many cases of bondage labour, the slave's life becomes collateral for the debt. This means that all of their work belongs to the master until the debt is repaid (Bales, 2009, p. 33 & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 14).

Contract slavery: This form of slavery offers guaranteed offers of guaranteed employment, but when the workers are taken to their place of work, they find they are enslaved. The contract is used as a trap to trick people into slavery. It is also a way to make slavery look legitimate if necessary. The slave faces violence, lacks freedom of movement and is unpaid (Bales, 2009, p. 34; & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 5).

Forced labour: This type of slavery refers to all forms of coerced labour that a person is required to perform against their will. People are made to perform tasks for which they have not voluntarily agreed under the threat of punishment. Forced labourers are viewed as assets to be used for profit. While all slavery is a form of forced labour, this term specifically refers to slavery that is carried out by a government or other group in addition to an individual. Forced labour is defined as work that is mandated by the government, institutions or armed forces. This includes forced prison labour as well as work that is required of participants in public works projects, military conscription or rebel groups (Bales, 2009, p. 34 & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 12).

Child slavery: This type of slavery is also referred to as child labour or child servitude. It refers to all forms of child labour that encourage coercion, force or deception to obtain labour from minors under eighteen using children. The term “child labour” refers to the earliest age at which children are required to perform illegally paid or unpaid services. Debt bondage, forced labour, prostitution, armed forces, domestic work and other dangerous labour are all ways that children can be made into slaves (Bales, 2009, p. 41 & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 37).

Serfdom: A type of slavery known as serfdom emerged as a result of indigenous people being conquered and subjugated. As a result of this

subjugation and having their lands taken, a form of slavery known as serfdom emerges. A landowner would give a “serf” or “peon” a piece of land in return for particular services, such as (1) giving the landowner a portion of the crop at harvest (sharecropping), (2) working for the landowner or (3) doing other work, such as performing household chores for the landowner’s household (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 11). Not providing labour in exchange for access to land is what is regarded as a form of servitude in each case; rather, it is the inability of the person who has serf status to escape it. The term “serf” can be used to describe either a tenant or a hereditary condition that continuously has an impact on entire families (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 11). Due to their tenant status and the alleged debts, they become debt-bound slaves and are obligated to work and pay, and in the latter scenarios are required to continue working for their landowner and their lands taken (Bales, 2009, p. 78- 79 & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 12).

Human trafficking: Trafficking occurs when individuals are kidnapped, purchased, or taken under false pretences of employment and a better life to exploit them sexually or in other ways. The UN (1994) (cited in Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 21) states that human trafficking entails the “illicit and clandestine movement of persons across national and international borders, largely from developing countries and some countries with economies in transition, with the end goal of forcing women and girls (children) into sexually or economically oppressive and exploitative situations for the profit of recruiters, traffickers and crime syndicates, as well as other illegal activities related to trafficking, such as forced domestic labour, false marriages, clandestine employment and false adoption.” Bales (2009, p. 52) further highlights that trafficking is sustained

through systematic coercion and deception, exploiting vulnerable populations for economic gain.

Prostitution: Prostitution includes men practising prostitution as well as women and children under the age of eighteen. Weissbrodt (2002, p. 31) cites that some international bodies consider prostitution above the age of 18 to be legal. However, the exploitation of prostitutes is often likened to slavery. Certain international organisations argue that such exploitation occurs when earnings from prostitution are transferred to another party. than the prostitute, as it is inherently abusive and analogous to slavery. “Exploitation of prostitutes” in Weissbrodt’s (2002, p. 31) view, includes maintaining or knowingly financing a brothel, that is to say, a place in which one or more people are practising as prostitutes, or knowingly letting or renting “a building or other place . . . for and of others” (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 31). Bales (2009, p. 56) also highlights that prostitution often involves coercion and exploitation, making it a form of modern slavery in many cases.

Contemporarily, another form of prostitution that is considered slavery is forced prostitution. Forced prostitution involves the use of various forms of coercion, threats and fraud to get women or men into prostitution or to continue practising as prostitutes. Forced prostitution occurs when a person is prostituted against his or her will, that is to say, is compelled under duress or intimidation to engage in sexual acts in return for money or payment in kind, whether such payment is passed to others or received by the victim of forced prostitution. Weissbrodt (2002, p. 30- 32) suggest that entering prostitution to earn money because of acute financial need should also be interpreted as “forced” prostitution. Forms of control over prostitutes include “(1) physical abuse; (2)

physical control of prostitutes' children, with threats to keep the children as hostages if prostitutes leave; (3) serious threats of physical harm, including murder; (4) keeping prostitutes in a continuous state of poverty and indebtedness; and (5) ensuring that they have no freedom to move outside unaccompanied" (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 30-32). This element of being forced and not having a choice makes it clear that forced prostitution is a modern form of slavery (Bales, 2009, p. 56).

Forced marriages and the sale of wives: Weissbrodt (2002), as cited in the United Nations report (2002) in *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary*, defines forced marriages and the sale of wives to include the "acquisition of girls by purchase disguised as payment of dowry, it being understood that this does not refer to normal marriage customs" (p. 35). It is also practised whereby "a woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or kind to her parents, guardian, family, or any other person or group" (p. 35) or "to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise" (p. 35). The final prohibited practice relates to the inheritance of a widow by her late husband's brother or another member of the late husband. This custom, known as 'levirate' involves automatic remarriage to a member of the deceased's family" (Bales, 2009, p. 104 & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 35).

Weissbrodt (2002, p. 36) opines that a sub-category under this slavey type is "mail order brides" which is also referred to as "paper marriages". With "paper marriages," a woman is forced to travel from one country to another by the husband or another person to assume the new state of an immigrant or a sex trafficked victim (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 36). Weissbrodt (2002) also adds that

“mail order brides” result when women are coerced into prostitution or any form of money creation venture to cater for the subsistence of their husbands and their families or other different individuals (p. 36).

Sex slavery: involves coercing individuals to engage in sexual activities against their will. This exploitation affects women, men, and children and often occurs within the commercial sex industry, including pornography, prostitution, strip clubs, escort services, brothels and other environments where sexual acts are exchanged for goods or money. Such exploitation strips individuals of their freedom and enforces control through coercion, deception and violence. This form of slavery creates ownership-like conditions, depriving victims of autonomy and subjecting them to sexual exploitation (Bales, 2009, p. 78–79; Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 31).

Although both Bales (2009, p. 6– 8) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 12– 13) acknowledge that historical and modern slavery share commonalities—such as the reduction of individuals to property, the use of coercion and the systemic denial of basic human rights—they also highlight unique forms of slavery that are rooted in cultural or social contexts. In African societies, for instance, traditional practices like forced child marriages and widow inheritance reflect culturally specific forms of bondage. These practices encourage coerced relationships and economic dependence, showcasing how slavery can manifest uniquely within specific cultural frameworks. This study focuses on female sex slavery, which remains a significant aspect of modern slavery. It examines how coercion, debt imposition and deceptive use of contracts are utilised to exploit women and girls for sexual purposes. By analysing two selected Nigerian texts, the study explores the representation of female sex slavery, particularly its

systemic mechanisms and the social and cultural dynamics that sustain it. The texts delve into the lived realities of domestic and transnational sex slavery, shedding light on its pervasive nature.

For this study, sex slavery is defined as a form of modern slavery in which individuals, especially women and girls are coerced, deceived or bound through debt and contracts into sexual exploitation. This practice often imposes ownership-like conditions, stripping victims of their autonomy and subjecting them to systemic abuse in both domestic and transnational settings.

2.2.4. Differentiating between “Old” and “Modern” Forms of Slavery

Bales (2009, p. 33) stipulates that globalisation affects slavery in the modern era. In Bales’ (2009) opinion, modernised forms of slavery exhibit some similarities across continents while the same cannot be said for the earlier forms of slavery (p. 33). In terms of ownership, Bales (2009) asserts that while slaves were once considered to be legal property in the past, doing so today is illegal and is not supported (p. 33). In comparison to the modern slave system, purchasing slaves under the old system is more expensive in terms of commodification (Bales, 2009, p. 33). Once more, compared to modern slavery, the old system of slavery produces relatively lower profits (Bales, 2009, p. 33).

Bales (2009) reiterates that the old system of slavery has “slave shortages” in comparison to the modern system, where there is an abundance of slaves (p. 33). In addition, the duration of the relationship between the old and new forms of slavery was long-term for the former and short-term for the latter (Bales, 2009, p. 33). Additionally, Bales (2009) asserts that, unlike in historical systems of slavery where individuals were owned for life, modern slaves are treated as disposable commodities, with their exploitation often being temporary and

driven purely by profit (p. 33). Lastly, racial and ethnic differences are more pronounced in the ‘old’ slave system than they are in the modern one (Bales, 2009, p. 33).

Additionally, Bales (2009, p. 25– 26) attributes the emergence of modern slavery and its distinct characteristics to the rapid population growth that occurred after the mid-20th century, particularly in regions with a history of slavery. He explains that this surge created an excess of vulnerable individuals, making exploitation easier and more profitable. Moreover, Bales (2009, p. 30) identifies government corruption as a critical factor, as it weakens legal enforcement and allows exploitative practices to flourish without consequence. Bales (2009, p. 21) emphasises that, first, the inability of available resources to meet the needs of a growing population caused the price of humans to decline. Second, he attributes the increase and low cost of slavery to the rise in inequalities driven by modernisation, particularly in rural areas, where small-scale subsistence farming has been replaced by labour-saving techniques (Bales, 2009, p. 22– 23). Moreover, Bales (2009, p. 24) highlights that globalisation has intensified these trends, reducing transportation costs both within and between countries, thereby facilitating the proliferation of trafficking and slavery.

2.2.5. Characteristics that define Modern Slavery

Both the justifications for the slavery act and the characteristics of slavery, in Bales’ (2009) opinion, are not contained in their “packaging” (p. 29). Bales (2009) emphasises that when determining the characteristics of slavery, the basic needs of the slave should come first (p. 30). Further, Bales (2009) states that slaves have very little freedom or the desire to act independently because of their status as properties owned by their masters (p. 30). As a result, the

owners control the slaves' daily schedules. This encourages the notion that slave owners have control over the lives of their slaves (Bales, 2009, p. 30).

Weissbrodt (2002) cites the issue of "ownership" of persons and the exercise of control over persons has been a recurring theme in all conventions to end slavery and practices that are similar to slavery (p. 7). Weissbrodt continues by stating that the level of control that can be deemed to be absolute in form (according to the Slavery Convention's wording) to constitute slavery as a prohibited act is ambiguous (p. 7). The phrase "any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership" (UN report, 2002. art. 2) from the definition of slavery (cited in the United Nations report from 2002 in *Abolishing Slavery and its Contemporary*) is used by Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) to emphasise this idea of ownership concerning slavery. Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) asserts that the phrase "any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership" is intended to offer a broad and inclusive definition of slavery. This definition is designed to cover not only traditional forms of slavery as seen in the African slave trade, such as the outright ownership and forced transportation of enslaved individuals—but also practices of comparable nature and effect. These may include modern slavery forms like debt bondage, forced labour, and human trafficking, which similarly strip individuals of autonomy and subject them to exploitative conditions akin to those experienced during the African slave trade.

Slave masters who exercised control over the slaves through violence or oppressive methods exploited the slaves economically without receiving payment. Since "human history," this is a quality that Bales emphasises has not changed (2009, p. 30). Bales (2009) claims that the assumption of slave status results from kidnapping, being born a slave or deception. Bales mentions that

the servile state can be attributed to gender-related factors, politics, myths, religion, and at times, an amalgam of any of these factors as to how people get under control (either repressive or violent) (2009, p. 30). The use of violence as a control measure for people to profit from their labour is the main component of Bales' (2009) argument that slavery is an exploitative enterprise (p. 30).

Slaves have been considered commodities owned by their slave masters, in Brace's (2004) opinion. However, Bales (2009) stresses that slaves regarded as commodified quantities do not always guarantee their long-lasting ownership concerning time, as slave ownership can be permanent or temporal. This is why Bales (2009) opines that "slavery need not be permanent or life-long" (p. 30). Although over the years, many people have been enslaved through treacherous acts such as drugging, trickery, coercion, etc., many, have escaped through various routes (Bales, 2009, p. 30). Bales stipulates that the length of servitude or slavery before a slave escaped could be more or less, but the fact that the person was once a slave remained (p. 30). Others are "discarded" as non-useful commodities after they depreciate. Thus, in Bales' (2009) view, the slaves are normally "discarded" for mostly depreciating strength or poor health reasons (p. 30). Weissbrodt (2002) supports Brace (2004) and Bales' (2009) notions, reiterating the fact that the old form of slavery is similar to, and popularly known to be chattel slavery (p. 7). Weissbrodt (2002) further mentions that chattel slavery is built on the proposition that slaves are possessions such as "livestock or furniture" (p. 7). As such, these slaves could be sold or given out to new slave masters. In Weissbrodt's (2002) view, the old form of ownership is gradually becoming non-existent, the same as Bales' (2009). Weissbrodt opines that the inexistent nature of the old slavery form is a result of the adaptation of several

characteristics of other forms of slavery aimed at gaining complete dominance and control over a slave while ensuring his or her subjugation by other individuals (2002, p. 7).

Concerning slavery, Bales (2009) states that repression or any form of physical molestation is not the only mechanism deployed to ensure the total enslavement and submission of their masters. Psychological threats and coercion are also employed to prevent slaves from leaving slave sites despite their environment's horrendous and mitigating nature (Bales, 2009, p. 31). The application of psychological threats and coercion defies the old slave mechanism where slaves are held in chains to minimise their escape. Thus, although the slaves are not chain-bound in modern times, psychological threats and coercion force them to accept their new statute, obey rules and submit to established orders from their masters (Bales, 2009, p. 31). Therefore, slaves accept their fate as not a predicament to dehumanise or cause harm to them but rather normal. In some cases, even if their situation is remorseful, it becomes part of their routine (Bales, 2009, p. 31).

In the modern context, Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) also indicates that the circumstances of the enslaved person are crucial to identifying what practices constitute slavery, and that comprise: "(i) the degree of restriction of the individual's inherent right to freedom of movement; (ii) the degree of control of the individual's personal belongings; and (iii) the existence of informed consent and a full understanding of the nature of the relationship between the parties."

In Weissbrodt's (2002, p. 7) view, it becomes apparent that these elements of control and ownership often accompanied by the threat of violence, are central to identifying the existence of slavery. Weissbrodt (2002) illustrates his

opinion by citing examples such as the cases of “the migrant worker whose passport has been confiscated by his or her employer; the child sold into prostitution, or the ‘comfort woman’ forced into sexual slavery” (p. 7)—stating that they “all have the element of choice and control of their lives taken from them, either by circumstance or through direct action, and passed to a third party, either an individual or a state” (Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 7).

In conclusion, people are held captive to generate revenue rather than just to commit acts of violence. Most slave owners believe that their practices are standard. It is simply a requirement of the job to hurt people, exercise total control, be cruel to them, or torture them. If all these elements are taken into consideration, slavery can be defined as a type of social and economic relationship in which a person is subjected to physical or psychological coercion, does not receive compensation for their labour, is subject to economic or other forms of exploitation, and is subject to the full weight of the authority attached to ownership rights.

2.3. Hughes’ (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*

Hughes’ (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* is one of the Economics model hypotheses regarding sex trafficking. The theory is based on four primary reasons (the people who buy sex; the sex traffickers; the state systems that support sex trafficking; and the cultures that facilitate sex slavery). Donna Hughes’ theory about the demand side of sex trafficking is based on the basic ideas of supply and demand in Economics.

Some Economics model studies (Hughes 2004; Hughes, 2005 & Lutya & Lanier 2012), for example, stipulate that supply and demand are the most important parts of capitalist economies when it comes to this basic Economics principle.

Lutya and Lanier (2012) claim that supply is the quantity of a product that the market can offer and demand is the price at which consumers are willing to purchase a product. When these concepts are applied to the phenomenon of prostitution, the individuals who are bought and sold for sexual services constitute the “supply.” In contrast, “demand” refers to those who have the desire, capacity and willingness to purchase sexual partners from that market (Hughes, 2005, p. 16). Their decision to acquire a sexual partner is voluntary. The “primary” level of demand that drives the prostitution industry has been described as sex purchasers (Hughes, 2004, p. 2). If they had decided not to buy sex acts, prostitution (sex trafficking) would not exist (Hughes, 2004, p. 2).

Hughes (2005, p. 7) claims that the majority of demand is made up of the buyers. The buyers hire prostitutes to perform sexual acts, but pimps carry out the coercion and violence required to obtain these sexual acts (Hughes, 2005, p. 7). Hughes (2005) posits that the term “secondary demand” (p. 8) applies to owners of prostitution marketplaces and corporations that profit from and support their operations. Those who own, manage or work for businesses connected to this global supply chain of businesses created to meet the prostitution market’s demands to generate profits (Hughes, 2005, p. 8).

Given Economics model theorists’ opinions, it is important to understand how and why exploitation happens by looking at the industry in which it happens. Hughes (2004, p. 20) believes that understanding how the market works makes it possible to come up with good plans to stop sexual abuse and exploitation.

Hughes' (2004; 2005) theory, anchored in economic principles, provides a compelling framework for literary criticism by conceptualizing commercial sex

exploitation as a transactional trade within the marketplace. This lens enables the understanding and critique of the dynamics of sex trafficking as portrayed in literary works. In this study, Hughes' (2004; 2005) theory is pivotal for analysing the demand factors in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009).

By focusing on the demand side of sex trafficking, the study elucidates how economic forces and market demand facilitate the recruitment and entrapment of key female characters in sex slavery. This approach not only uncovers the mechanisms traffickers employ to exploit these economic forces but also emphasises the broader socio-economic dynamics that perpetuate such exploitation. The debt-bound and contract slavery, offering a comprehensive understanding of how economic underpinnings shape the experiences of the characters.

Hughes' (2004; 2005) theory identifies various motives—such as purchasing, owning, legalizing and publicising—that reflect how the novels illustrate the complexities of sex slavery. By employing this theoretical framework, the study critiques the interplay between economic imperatives and narrative structures, revealing how these factors influence character development and plot progression.

Ultimately, Hughes' (2004; 2005) theory integrates economic perspectives into literary analysis, highlighting the intricate connections between market demand and the lived realities of sex slavery in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009). This intersection of economics and literature enriches our understanding of the texts, providing critical insights into the societal forces that drive exploitation and the narratives that emerge from these contexts.

2.3.1. Components of *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* (2004; 2005)

This theory states that the demand for prostitutes is composed of four groups: users or purchasers; profiteers or exploiters; the state or government and culture (Hughes, 2004, p. 1- 2 & Hughes, 2005, p. 7). Hughes (2004, p. 1- 2), Hughes (2005, p. 7) and Lutya and Lanier (2012) define users or purchasers as those who pay prostitutes for sexual services; profiteers are those who profit from the sale of prostitutes; and sociocultural attitudes toward sex slavery include the state, in addition to academic and media reporting, writing and publicising about prostitution. The demand factors for sex trafficking, in Hughes' (2004; 2005) opinion, comprise:

The purchasers/users/buyers

Except in literary representations, the purchasers of sex slaves are frequently portrayed as faceless and anonymous figures, a notion highlighted by Hughes (2005, p. 7). She emphasises that buyers of sex acts originate from diverse backgrounds, encompassing various ages, socioeconomic statuses, occupations and ethnicities (Hughes, 2004, p. 28). While Hughes notes that the choices made by purchasers in seeking sexual services reflect their autonomy (Hughes, 2004, p. 28), it is imperative to recognise that such autonomy exists in contrast to the coercion endured by individuals forced into sex slavery. This disparity underscores the power dynamics at play, wherein buyers frequently purchase sexual acts while victims remain trapped in exploitative circumstances (Hughes, 2004, p. 29).

The demand for sexual services by buyers constitutes a significant factor propelling the sex trafficking industry, as elucidated by Hughes (2005, p. 7).

She argues that purchasers exploit the vulnerabilities of sex slaves, utilising them for sexual pleasure, violence and entertainment (Hughes, 2005, p. 7). This exploitation is further exacerbated by cultural attitudes that commodify the bodies of victims, particularly in regions with high trafficking rates, where societal norms may perceive these individuals as "sellable" products (Lutya & Lanier, 2012).

Hughes (2004, p. 17) identifies a diverse array of motivations that drive purchasers to engage with sex slaves. These motivations often emerge from personal deficiencies or desires, as well as societal attitudes that normalise the objectification of women (Hughes, 2004, p. 16). The narratives within *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009) portray these dynamics, depicting men as the primary purchasers of sexual acts and thereby reinforcing the notion that women predominantly occupy the role of victims in this transaction.

Moreover, Hughes (2004, p. 10) argues that the moral and cultural significance attributed to sex slaves by male purchasers substantially contributes to the demand for such services. This perspective is echoed by Coy, Horvath and Kelly (2007, p. 19), who assert that societal ideals of masculinity perpetuate the exploitation of sex slaves. The narratives explored in the selected texts reflect this reality, portraying male characters who embody these cultural ideals, often resulting in the maltreatment and abuse of women.

Hughes (2004, p. 19) further discusses the violent and exploitative behaviours exhibited by sex buyers, referencing a study by Black (2003) that reveals the predatory nature of many purchasers. This study indicates that men frequently approach sexual encounters with a sense of entitlement, perceiving their interactions with sex slaves as a natural extension of their masculinity

(Black, 2003, cited in Hughes, 2004, p. 19). Such attitudes not only normalise violence against women but also perpetuate a cycle of exploitation vividly portrayed in the literary works under scrutiny.

In conclusion, while this study acknowledges the existence of female purchasers of sexual services, it primarily focuses on the male buyers depicted in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009). These texts illustrate the pervasive notion of men as the sole purchasers, thereby reinforcing the gendered dynamics of power and exploitation inherent in the sex trade. Hughes' (2004; 2005) insights into the economic and cultural foundations of sex slavery provide a critical framework for understanding these narratives and the societal structures that sustain them.

The profiteers/exploiters

In the discourse on sexual exploitation, Hughes (2005, p. 8) asserts that exploiters profit from the commodity trade in sex. This trade includes a wide range of actors within the sexual exploitation industry (Hughes, 2005, p. 8). Lutya and Lanier (2012) define a profiteer as anyone who financially benefits from the sexual exploitation of young women and girls. The South African Law Reform Commission (2009, p. 43–44, cited in Lutya & Lanier, 2012) identifies various profiteers, including club owners, brothel proprietors, pimps, massage parlour operators and rental room owners. These individuals constitute the sex industry (Hughes, 2005, p. 8).

Addedly, Hughes (2004; 2005) categorises exploiters into two groups: primary and secondary. Primary exploiters include organised crime groups and corrupt officials. Secondary profiteers comprise businesses that facilitate the sex industry, such as hotels and taxi services (Hughes, 2004, p. 2 & 2005, p. 8).

Brothel owners, in Gould and Fick (2007, p. 14) (cited in Lutya & Lanier, 2012) view illustrate the dynamics of exploitation. The exploiters purchase young women and girls to expand their workforce and maximise profits through various strategies (Gould & Fick, 2007, p. 14, cited in Lutya & Lanier, 2012).

Moreso, Hughes (2005) identifies six distinct "business models" used by traffickers to profit from the recruitment and sexual exploitation of victims (p. 11). Model Five—Traditional Slavery and Modern Technology—specifically pertains to West Africa and Nigeria. In this model, traffickers use traditional practices like voodoo to control victims. They also use modern transportation methods to facilitate trafficking to lucrative Western markets (Shelley, 2003, as cited in Hughes, 2005, p. 11). This model is relevant in texts that explore how cultural practices and technology can be manipulated to subjugate females.

Hughes also presents other models, such as Model One (Post-Soviet Organised Crime) and Model Two: Commerce and Growth specifically in China. Model Three (the supermarket trade between the United States and Mexico). Model Four: The Violent Entrepreneur Model that describes Balkan crime groups that operate sex trade enterprises in Western Europe. Lastly, Model Six: The Dutch Approach to Regulation and the Rational Actor posits that regulated prostitution may deter trafficking, yet a significant black market remains alongside legal operations (Hughes, 2005, p. 12). As Hughes (2005, p. 12) asserts, these models show the various ways traffickers exploit legal prostitution markets for profit.

In conclusion, the demand side of Hughes' (2004; 2005) theory significantly contributes to literary analysis of the selected Nigerian texts by highlighting the pervasive presence of both male and female exploiters within

the sex trafficking narrative. The texts illustrate how male purchasers and traffickers serve as primary agents of exploitation. At the same time, the narratives acknowledge the roles of women in positions of power within the industry. This dual presence underscores the intricate dynamics of gender and exploitation, emphasising the complexities of human trafficking.

The state

By allowing or legalising prostitution, the state, albeit inadvertently, increases the demand for victims (Hughes, 2005, p. 8). Again, Hughes (2005) emphasises that states become more involved in the demand for victims the more they regulate prostitution and generate tax revenue from it (p. 8). Further, Hughes (2005) emphasises that it is essential to examine the laws and policies of the destination countries if demand is viewed as the driving force behind traffic. Hughes asserts once more that government officials in countries where sex trafficking occurs do not want to admit there is a problem or be held accountable for encouraging people to become victims (p. 8). Plans to protect the sex industries, which generate millions or billions of dollars annually in tourist-heavy nations, have been frequently proposed (Hughes, 2005, p. 8).

Furthermore, Hughes (2005, p. 8) argues that when prostitution is legalised, governments anticipate an influx of tax revenue. Where prostitution is illegal, criminals, organised crime groups and corrupt government officials profit. These exploiters exert pressure on these legislators and government officials to enact policies that facilitate their activities (Hughes, 2005, p. 8). In Hughes' (2005) study, she opines that the exploiters use their authority and influence to enact laws and policies that keep women in their sex industries (p. 8). In Hughes' (2005) view, this is accomplished by legalising sex trafficking (p. 8).

In conclusion, the state significantly influences the dynamics of sex trafficking, as highlighted by Hughes (2004: 2005). By legalising prostitution, the state inadvertently increases the demand for victims. This relationship is crucial for literary analysis, as it reveals how narratives reflect government complicity in sexual exploitation. The selected texts demonstrate the reluctance of officials to recognise their role in fostering victimisation, while also showcasing how corrupt state personnels manipulate laws to maintain their power. Ultimately, these themes underscore how state policies impact human trafficking and the lives affected by it.

Culture

Hughes (2005, p. 8) highlights the significant impact of key socio-cultural norms that normalise sex work for women. The media glamorises sex work in films, portrays it in popular music and showcases it in advertising. These portrayals can distort public understanding, often depicting sex work as glamorous or an easy way to make money, thereby influencing societal attitudes (Hughes, 2005, p. 8). Mansson (2006, as cited in Luty & Lanier, 2012) argues that the widespread publication of sexualized images in print media fosters the belief among men that purchasing sex is acceptable (p. 90). Coy et al. (2007) further note that alluring advertisements for women selling sex can inadvertently promote sex slavery (p. 13).

In the context of West Africa, narratives about sex work must be understood within broader contexts of cultural representation, economic disparity and colonial legacies. Colonial histories have established power dynamics that continue to shape gender relations and economic opportunities for women in the region. Nnaemeka (2003) cites that the commodification of women in post-

colonial societies relates to both historical exploitation and modern media portrayals (p. 45). Therefore, Mama (1997) emphasises the importance of critically engaging with these media representations, as they often reinforce patriarchal norms and silence women's voices (p. 112).

Further, economic disparities in West Africa significantly contribute to vulnerabilities that drive women into sex work. Scholars such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986, p. 50) argue that systemic inequalities limit access to education and employment, pushing women into precarious situations. Ngozi Adichie (2015, p. 92) emphasises that many women turn to sex work as a means of survival, driven by economic necessity. Additionally, Soyinka (1996, p. 134) highlights the intersection of poverty and gender inequities, creating a context where sex work becomes one of the few viable options for financial support. This cycle of vulnerability continues to perpetuate the challenges faced by women in these regions. Hughes (2005) also notes the rise of internet-based sex industries, which have become profitable and popular (p. 8). Pornographers increasingly migrate to developing nations, where weaker regulations allow for greater exploitation (Hughes, 2005, p. 8). This trend reflects critiques by post-colonial scholar, Mohanty, who asserts that globalisation can exacerbate inequalities and expose women to greater risks (Mohanty, 2003, p. 78).

In all, understanding West African narratives about sex work requires a comprehensive view that considers cultural representations, economic conditions, and the ongoing impacts of colonial legacies. These factors intertwine to shape the lived experiences of women involved in sex work, highlighting the need for nuanced discussions in both academic and public discourse.

In sum, the *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* (Hughes, 2004; 2005) extracts four variables: the users, the profiteers, and the publicity that prostitution receives from the state and culture. All four indicators point to a rise in sex slavery and prostitution. Sexual slaves represent the victims, while users and profiteers represent the perpetrators. Publicity, along with the fact that culture and the government have normalised prostitution, enables prostitutes to work openly. Hughes (2005) and other economic model theorists and researchers, such as Shelly (2003), Lutya and Lanier (2012) and Vogel (2017), among others, all agree that these demand factors of sex trafficking demonstrate the need for more research on the demand (perpetrator focussed) side of sex trafficking than the victim-focussed side of sex trafficking.

In conclusion, Hughes's (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* provides a compelling framework for analysing Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). In both novels, the portrayal of characters involved in trafficking reveals the societal motivations and justifications behind their actions, emphasising the moral ambiguities surrounding the demand for sex work. The narratives examine how economic desperation drives individuals into exploitative situations, illustrating Hughes's (2004; 2005) argument about the systemic inequalities that fuel trafficking. Furthermore, the texts explore the impact of state policies and cultural norms on the lives of those caught in sex trafficking. Chinwuba and Sanusi highlight the complicity of the state and society in perpetuating these practices, reinforcing Hughes's (2004; 2005) assertion that cultural narratives often normalise exploitation. Moreover, both works delve into the intersectionality of gender, race and class, showcasing how these factors influence the experiences

of characters involved in sex work. Together, these texts provide a nuanced critique of the demand for sex trafficking, aligning with Hughes's (2004; 2005) insights and enriching the discourse surrounding these critical issues.

2.4 Empirical Review

2.4.1 Introduction

This component of the thesis devoted to empirical evaluation consists of a review of relevant research. A study of selected sex slavery works on Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) and some contemporary Western African travelogues. Further, selected works on economic model theories on demand for victims of sex trafficking are also reviewed.

2.4.2. Review of Selected Sex Slavery Studies on Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) and West African travelogues.

Sex slavery is a modern form of slavery gaining critical attention globally, particularly in West Africa. where scholars like Carling (2006), Kara (2007) and Bales (2009) highlight its increasing prevalence. Notable third-generation West African female writers, including Amma Darko, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, and Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, address this issue in their works. Additionally, Abidemi Sanusi and Ifeoma Chinwuba contribute to the conversation through their texts, *Eyo* (2009) and *Merchants of Flesh* (2009), which have attracted scholarly interest and support the campaign against sex slavery. In the studies by Nadaswaran (2011), Kraze (2017), Ayuk-Etang (2018), Lèfara (2018), Eyang and Edung (2019), Ligaga (2019), Nutsupko (2019), Okolie and Chukwunwike (2021), and Tuo (2023), conclude that the environments Black females inhabit contribute to their enslavement as sex slaves. These writers assert that

economic, social and political disillusionment in these spaces facilitates the trafficking and recruitment of Black women into sex slavery. Conversely, Longdet and Ezekulie (2022) shift focus in their study to the "psychoneurotic" implications of migration, examining the mental states of Black women before and after their experiences with forced prostitution. Similarly, Uwakwe (2019) emphasises that self-alienation and delusional perceptions about Europe lead to their migration and subjugation abroad.

Ligaga (2019) who employs a feminist epistemology mentions that despite Black females' vulnerability to violent events, both present and past, the things these women crave persist. As a result, her analyses of Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) challenge how these women navigate the environments in which they inhabit, a concept she refers to as "ambiguous agency" (p. 75). In Ligaga's (2019, p. 74) view, it is this "ambiguous agency" that the sex trafficked women navigate "within their [abilities] to survive and remain resilient in the face of atrocities for borders crossers" and the outside spaces (Europe).

Parallel to Ligaga's (2019) study is Nutsukpo's (2019) postmodernist study of Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995) and Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* (2008). In her study, she extrapolates Darko's and Adimora-Ezeigbo's stylistic illustrations of trafficking, what drives trafficking and the maintenance structures keeping the trafficking business ongoing. Moreso, Nutsukpo (2019) cites the usefulness of the two female authors' depictions "of the construction of self-narratives during victim's rehabilitation" (p. 117)—providing relieving measures together with efficient ways of restoring victims to good states to ensure their successful societal re-incorporation. Furthermore, she concurs with Ligaga (2019) on the environment as a causal factor behind sex trafficking

concluding that globalisation, gender inequality, poverty and the worse West African political climate were drives influencing the forced migration of Black women into forced prostitution.

Similarly, Kraze (2017) adopts Vital's (2008) African ecocritical perspective in his analysis of the novel, *Eyo* (2009), arguing that ecology is not subordinate to the socio-political facets of living, which are inextricably linked. As a result, there is no actual dividing line between nature and human culture or interpretation. Thus, the natural and constructed environment is, in reality, a depository of many experiences documented from inside the boundaries of several chronologies. Focussing on the interplay between natural and cultural environment, Kraze (2017) analyses the non-rural environment of poor people, or how hardship gets imposed on the urban surroundings.

Congruent to Kraze (2017) and Ligaga (2019); Nadaswaran (2011), analysing within the framework of womanist theory, stipulates that policies in Nigeria—which she describes as neo-liberal, were the causal factors that bred corruption and poverty, resulting in Nigerian female characters fighting in interstitial spaces of sex trafficking in Europe, which females are pushed into via their psyche of overweening ambition to access emancipation. Moreso, Nadaswaran (2011) examines “the fundamental characteristics and resistance shown by the enslaved person's life” (p. 276) in Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009).

However, Longdet and Ezekulie (2022) conduct a psycho-neurotic analysis of Sanusi's work, *Eyo* (2009). They incorporate concepts from psychosis, neurosis, and psychoanalytical criticism to examine how “dysfunctional” African families (p. 122), the “African socio-economic reality” (p. 121) and the antecedents of “post-traumatic repressed emotions” (p. 124) contribute to

psychoneurosis among Black female sex slaves. Longdet and Ezekulie's (2022) study indicates the mental states of Black women who are entrapped as sex slaves. In the study, the writers emphasise that for Black women to confront the heinous ordeals of sex slavery, such as having routine sexual encounters with unknown men as the only means of debt settlement, the Black sex slaves ought to mentally prepare themselves.

Similarly, in a post-colonial study of Unigwes' *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009) and Adichie's *Americanah* (2013), Uwakwe (2019) implicates Black females for being delusional, thus showing evidence of self-alienation, psychological slavery and self-enslavement resulting from their prospects for migrating to and their dependency on Europe and America for better livelihoods. Uwakwe (2019) highlights that as a result of the Black females' perception of and subsequently, their migration to Europe and America, their psyches have made these illegal female migrants delusional that they are conditioned to "project an extension or rebranding of the coloniser's original [ideals], the need for the balkanisation and mission into Africa" (p. 408). In other words, the adoption and projection of the white man's culture by the diasporic females before that of Africa render "the devaluation of the material, cultural and human resources" (p. 408)—the resulting consequences—the psychological subjugation and self-enslavement of Black women.

Eyang and Edung (2017) examine sex slavery and human trafficking in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) from an "economism" perspective. Thus, an economic system that "relegates other societal elements of morality, culture, integrity, communality and love, emphasising economic returns and materialistic cravings" resulted in social vices such as sex trafficking and sex

slavery, among others (p. 104). The authors, in their study, investigate the interplay among “history, politics, culture, socio-economic conditions and relationships, religion, language and other elements” (p. 105) in sex slavery and human trafficking from a “bi-dimensional mode” (p. 104)—that is, its effects on both the sex trafficked victim and the sex traffickers. Drawing on Stephen Greenblatt’s New Historicism with allusions to the Marxist and Feminist theories, Eyang and Edung (2017) indicate that human trafficking and sex slavery, which are primarily due to the longing to migrate abroad from miseries at home, present its victims with indelible abuses.

Congruent to Eyang and Edung’s (2017) study is Lèfara (2018) exploration on the significance of the body in Ifeoma Chinwuba’s *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) within a framework that examines the intersections of gender, socio-economic factors and cultural narratives in African societies. Lèfara (2018) highlights how the commodification of women's bodies reflects broader socio-economic issues, such as poverty and inequality, which exacerbate vulnerabilities and lead to exploitation (p. 115). Lèfara (2018) also discusses the portrayal of women's bodies as embodying both oppression and agency, illustrating the struggle against societal norms that devalue women's identities (p. 117). Furthermore, the treatment of these bodies mirrors cultural narratives that often depict women as commodities, reinforcing patriarchal structures and societal expectations (Lèfara, 2018, p. 118). This commodification is intertwined with socio-economic factors, underscoring how economic disparities contribute to the exploitation of women in the context of human trafficking (p. 119). Lèfara (2018, p. 120) concludes that Chinwuba’s work encourages readers to critically engage with the complexities of human

trafficking and its implications for social justice, emphasising the need for a nuanced understanding of the body in these discussions.

Likewise, Ayuk-Etang's (2018) analysis of Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), points out that the dependence on migration as an assurance for liberation from harsh socio-economic and political West African environment "by the post-colonial [female] citizen in the 21st century is nothing short of a euphemism for eventual [sexual] servitude" away from home (p. 140). Based on her analyses from a post-colonial standpoint, Ayuk-Etang (2018) avers that West African female migrants who long for independence from their home environments through migration end up dependent, thus becoming 'subaltern' migrants. From Ayuk-Etang's (2018) conclusions, there is a re-depiction of a post-colonial binary—"abroad and (in)dependence" or "home and independence," with regards to forced migration—signifying that the African female migrant attains dependency statuses which make them servile [in the destination countries], that is, sex slaves and vice-versa. Therefore, Ayuk-Etang's (2018, p. 140) study recommends that the post-colonial West African female should not resort to "reliance on migration for liberation, freedom, independence, etc."—escapism. Instead, contemporary West African females ought to work towards improving their countries' state of affairs, where they enjoy their independence from the traffickers' or the colonisers' whims and caprices.

Similar to Ayuk-Etang's (2018) study, Tuo (2023) explores the pressing issue of human trafficking, which has gained significant literary focus. By employing Postcolonial concepts like glocalisation and radical feminism and dependency theory, Tuo (2023) analyses the commodification of female bodies

in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh*. (2003). The study highlights how political and socio-economic factors drive emigration from African countries to European "promised lands," (Tuo, 2023, p. 243) contributing to slavery-like conditions for trafficked individuals. Tuo (2023) concludes that Chinwuba, from a female perspective, sensitively portrays the struggles of trafficking victims in Nigeria and Italy, highlighting the socio-economic context of poverty and colonial uncertainties (p. 243). Tuo reiterates that through vivid depictions of violence and exploitation, Chinwuba illustrates her characters' physical and psychological suffering, transforming their trauma into a call for action (Tuo, 2023, p. 245- 246). Tuo (2023) also add that Chinwuba through her narrative envisions resilient female characters who challenge the scourge of sex trafficking while questioning feminism's effectiveness in addressing women's issues (p. 226).

In tandem with Ayuk-Etang (2018) and Tuo's (2023) studies is Okolie and Chukwunwike's (2021) analyses of Abani's *Becoming Abigail* (2006) and Unigwes' *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009). Using the migration framework, the writers investigate the trafficking of Black women, terming the slavish act as "neo-slavery in nature" (p. 23). Okolie and Chukwunwike (2021) also emphasise the inescapable episodic abuse associated with female sex slavery reiterating that female sex slaves are subjected "to gross inhuman treatment and excessive objectification" (p. 23) which leads to the loss of their identities which they term "ghostification" (p. 28). Conterminous to Ayuk-Etang's (2018) recommendation, Okolie and Chukwunwike (2021) also conclude that the migration of females abroad, as a form of escape from the harsh socio-economic climates at home is not either a considerate alternative. Europe is not a place of

all opportunities, but rather, an avenue where the victims' "identities are erased and their bodies defiled to the extent that those who survive are forced to replicate the violence meted on them" (Okolie & Chukwunwike, 2021, p. 31).

The gap identified in the existing literature appears to centre on the limited exploration of demand-side variables in sex trafficking, particularly concerning the experiences of Black women. Additionally, there seems to be a noticeable absence of analysis regarding the mechanisms underlying the occurrences of sex slavery. While previous studies, including those on Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009), predominantly focus on the supply side—examining victim-centred factors that facilitate trafficking and sexual exploitation—this study shifts the focus to the demand side, highlighting representations of sex slavery as coerced, indebted, and indentured. This approach is vital for understanding how demand factors contribute to the recruitment and enslavement of female victims. To analyse these phenomena, the study adopts frameworks based on Bales' (2009) *Theory of Slavery Forms* and Weissbrodt's (2002) *Classifications of Slavery*, and Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Theories on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*. Although these frameworks do not traditionally fall within the realm of literary criticism, they provide essential insights into the representations of sex slavery, the socio-economic dynamics and systemic influences that drive human trafficking and sex slavery. By deploying these theories, the analysis gains depth and context, allowing for a broader understanding of literary depictions of sex slavery and the demands factors that influences sex slavery in the narratives in the selected texts.

The selection of Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) is justified in relation to the research questions and the theoretical

frameworks employed. Both texts vividly illustrate the interplay between demand factors and the lived experiences of Black women, as well as the depictions of sex slavery, making them particularly relevant for this study. By applying the frameworks established by Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002), and Hughes (2004; 2005), this study uncovers the representations of sex slavery and the underlying demand dynamics, thereby enhancing comprehension of the broader issues surrounding migration, trafficking and sex slavery.

2.4.3. Review of selected studies on Economic Model Theories on Sex Slavery

Recently, there have been calls from economic model theorists to focus studies on sex slavery on the factors influencing the demand for women in involuntary prostitution. This shift arises from the tendency of existing research to concentrate on supply factors, often placing blame on female victims. In this context, selected studies related to Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* are reviewed.

Shelley (2003) highlights the importance of the market in understanding organised crime involved in trafficking women. She identifies six business models linked to distinct national groups and argues that these models reflect historical influences, geographical realities and market forces (p. 45). Shelley asserts that trafficking serves an economic purpose beyond the traffickers and that combating it requires economic strategies to support victims and seize traffickers' assets (p. 50). Similarly, Aronowitz, Theuermann, and Tyurykanova (2010) analyse the profitability of human trafficking through rational choice and neutralisation theories. Their research reveals that understanding the commercial aspects of trafficking and the markets sustaining it is crucial for

effective intervention (p. 112). Likewise, Luty and Lanier (2012) develop an integrated model that encompasses various stages of human trafficking for forced prostitution. They incorporate insights from multiple disciplines, illustrating that both traffickers and demand significantly contribute to the victimisation of women (p. 78). Their findings suggest that an integrated framework is necessary for effective prevention and prosecution (p. 85).

Vogel (2017) examines demand in the context of economics and its relationship to supply, price and market. He critiques the inconsistent use of demand in anti-trafficking discussions, urging researchers to clarify the “demanders” and their needs to enhance understanding (p. 34). Finally, Anderson and Davidson (2002) investigate human trafficking as a demand-led problem, finding that vulnerable labour in the sex and domestic markets is highly sought after. Their study, based on data from six countries, emphasises the need for policymakers to address the demand for trafficked individuals, particularly in sectors lacking labour regulations (p. 22).

Together, these studies underscore the necessity of focusing on demand factors to better understand and combat human trafficking and sex slavery. Although these works do not focus directly on literary criticism, they provide valuable insights into the socio-economic factors influencing trafficking. This study, while rooted in literary analysis and utilising novels as its data, aligns with the reviewed works by exploring similar themes of demand side of sex trafficking. By integrating literary narratives with economic theories, this research aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of sex trafficking, bridging the gap between literary and socio-economic perspectives.

2.5. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter examines literature based on Bales' (2009) and Weissbrodt's (2002) views on slavery, focusing on definitions, types and distinctions between "old" and "modern" forms. It reviews literature related to Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*. Additionally, relevant empirical research on sex slavery in West African migratory texts and demand variables in trafficking is reviewed. The chapter identifies gaps in existing studies, linking them to the thesis statement and the two selected texts. To address these gaps, this study employs a framework based on Bales' (2009) and Weissbrodt's (2003) theories to illustrate depictions of sex slavery while using Hughes' (2004; 2005) theory to analyse the demand factors driving the trafficking of African women. This analysis sets the stage for examining how sex slavery is literary depicted in the selected texts. These literary depictions of sex slavery are detailed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0. LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF SEX SLAVERY IN

MERCHANTS OF FLESH (2003) AND EYO (2009)

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, analysis and discussions of the first research question are done using the conceptual framework for forms of sex slavery developed from Bales' (2009) theory and Weissbrodt's (2002) theory. More so, in the analyses and discussions, the literary criticism to this effect comprises quotes from Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) and other related African migratory novels.

3.2. RQ.1. How is Sex Slavery Literary Portrayed in the Selected Texts?

Based on the conceptual framework of the sex slavery forms, the representations of sex slavery in the two selected texts are analysed and discussed. The sex slavery forms are categorised under three main forms:

3.2.1. Forced labour ['Coerced' sex slavery]

Coerced sex slavery embodies the abhorrent demand for sexual services rendered under duress and devoid of consent (Bales, 2009, p. 12; Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 34). This form of slavery manifests as sex slavery resulting from forced labour, typically imposed upon victims by both public and private entities. Through coercive tactics, this insidious practice seeks to exploit and oppress individuals, compelling them to participate in the commercial sex trade.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba narrates the lived experiences of Faith Moses and other female migrants as they journey from Nigeria to Italy. Their odyssey exposes a panorama of sex crimes in Nigeria, including the metaphor of "body tolls" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 60) and "bed tolls" (Chinwuba,

2003, p. 161). These metaphors denote the coerced sexual acts that corrupt border guards and embassy officials exact from the girls, revealing the pervasive nature of human trafficking.

The "body toll" serves as a metaphor of bribery, illustrating how dishonest border guards contribute to sex trafficking, with their lustful demands acting as a toll for passage. The girls' journey, as depicted in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), is fraught with peril and pain. In search of a better life, they encounter sexual exploitation and abuse. At each border they cross, in "West Africa, through the Seme border into Cotonou, then on to Togo through La Condji and Ghana" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 60) they are confronted by the predatory gaze and invasive touch of guards who demand their bodies as a price for passage. Chinwuba recounts, "Occasionally when the night meets them at the border posts, the girls would be required to sleep with the men on duty" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 60), evoking a sense of dread as the girls are coerced into submitting to the border guards' sexual desires, lest they be sent back to their wretched homeland. The narrator's tone conveys the profound despair that fills Faith Moses and the other girls' hearts, capturing the trauma they endure as they approach each border—an experience that strips them of dignity, agency and hope.

The fear gripping these young women renders them powerless, forcing them into compliance with the guards' demands. Each border post presents a brutal choice: to surrender their flesh or abandon their dreams. The narrator's tone encapsulates the horror and humiliation that accompany their crossings, underscoring the dehumanising nature of their plight. Chinwuba's depiction of "body toll" sex acts at the border affirms Bales' (2009) assertion that "corrupt border guards reportedly accept payments to enable trafficking" (p. 67).

Despite Faith Moses and the other girls being labelled as illegal migrants lacking proper documentation, the behaviour of the border guards project an irony of the expected actions of law enforcement, which should involve arrest and deportation. Instead, the guards engage in sexual coercion, illustrating a profound irony of power and vulnerability, where authority figures exploit undocumented female migrants to facilitate their own interests. Moreover, the International Labour Organization outlines that one criterion for defining forced labour is "the threat of denunciation to the authorities, where the [person] worker is in an illegal immigration situation" (Bales, 2009, p. 35). Chinwuba similarly categorises Faith Moses and her companions as "illegal immigrants" due to their possession of forged travel documents. Consequently, these vulnerable girls fall prey to the predatory schemes of corrupt officials, who exploit their fear of deportation.

This narrative resonates with Faith and the illegal migrant girls who due to desperation navigate the complexities of migration and the accompanying dangers. Driven by the urgency to seek better lives. Faith and the other girls' journey expose them to predatory individuals who exploit their vulnerabilities. One revelation of this "body toll" exploitation occurs is women coerced into participating in a sex slavery, demonstrating the relentless pressure faced by women in search of opportunities, one that leads migrant in 'selling' their bodies in order to realise their dreams by migrating abroad. Before the women resort to selling themselves, Faith and the other girls observe the pervasive hopelessness surrounding them at the border posts. This socio-economic context of systemic exploitation and limited opportunities sets the stage for Faith and

the other girls' painful decisions, highlighting how desperation can lead women down a treacherous path, often resulting in coerced sexual slavery.

Furthermore, Faith and the girls encounters with corrupt border guards reveal the systematic nature of gender-based violence, as they navigate a landscape rife with danger and betrayal. The fear and uncertainty that accompany Faith and the other girls' choices serve to emphasise the oppressive reality faced by female migrants. Therefore, *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) shows the hardships that women endure in a patriarchal society, reflecting on the pervasive issues of gender-based violence, human trafficking and sex slavery that continue to plague the region. Chinwuba's portrayal of Faith and her companions' struggles not only highlights the intersection of socio-economic pressures with the threat of sexual exploitation but also shows the urgent need for systemic change to protect vulnerable women seeking better lives.

Chinwuba presents a compelling exploration of the complex interplay between migration and the alluring yet harmful nature of sex slavery, particularly through the metaphor of "bed tolls" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 161), another form of bribery scandal levied by officials at the Italian embassy in Nigeria. Within *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Nigerian life is depicted as exceedingly harsh, a landscape riddled with corruption and economic instability. This dire context propels citizens like Faith Moses and her companions to yearn for a better existence, prompting their migration to Italy in search of improved livelihoods.

Bales (2009) observes that "women and girls who are trafficked are most likely to come from poor, unstable and corrupt nations" (p. 44). This assertion runs parallel within Chinwuba's narrative, which illustrates how the intertwined

forces of poverty and government corruption create a fertile ground for trafficking. In this regard, Nutsupko (2019) posits that the most debilitating elements in regions characterised by high migration rates are indeed poverty and governmental corruption (p. 121). In relation to Bales and Nutsukpo's views, Chinwuba paints a striking visual imagery of Nigeria, portraying it as a nation rich in resources yet paradoxically impoverished. This is encapsulated in the lamentation: "A country that generates petrol, to be experiencing fuel shortage for so many years now. What is the government doing for goodness sake? Which gorment? Our rulers are only interested in lining their pockets." (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 101). Such statements echo the frustrations of countless Nigerians who find themselves at the mercy of a system that prioritises wealth accumulation over societal welfare.

The narrator further underscores Faith's precarious financial situation through her declaration, "I am poor, poor, poor. How can I not be poor when I am an ordinary ward-maid in a third-rate clinic?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 31). The constant repetition of the word 'poor' serves as a rhetorical device that highlights and intensifies the high rate of impoverishment in Bini City and Nigeria as a whole, projecting the low employment opportunities that result in harsh living conditions for the citizens.

The repetition justifies the vulnerabilities of the citizenries that create the agency for migration to Europe, a place they perceive as paradise on earth. The agency of the citizenries to fulfil their ambitions, coupled with pervasive poverty, renders citizens like Faith and her companions—Amaka and Chioma—vulnerable to exploitation. They become ensnared as sex slaves, forced into degrading acts by employees at the Italian consulate, who view bribes as a

customary part of their services to hopeful visa applicants. Chinwuba narrates the distress conversation of a female interviewee and a male counterpart as follows:

I know someone who brought ten letters of introduction from a minister. Still, they refused him a visa. If you like, bring ten letters from the president; if you don't have the bribe to back it up, they won't give you a visa. ...listen to this man, who does not take bribe? Even in this embassy, some staff collect 'bed toll' from girls before they get ordinary appointments for visa interviews. And that is no guarantee that they will be successful (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 161).

The excerpt is a satire that reveals the corruption, lack of respect for authority and bribery in institutions. It mocks a minister—one of “[the] rulers [who is] only interested in lining [his pocket]” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 101)—who prioritises aiding migration over creating better living conditions for citizens. The minister symbolises leaders who abandon their responsibilities, focused instead on personal gains.

Similarly, in a struggling economy, where poverty forces many to seek visas, embassy officials take advantage of the situation. They pretend to respect the minister's or president's authority, but their actions show otherwise. Instead, they act in their own interest, replacing cash bribes with “bed tolls.” This ironic term serves as a euphemism that hides the truth that women, too poor to pay cash bribes, are forced to offer sexual favours instead.

Chinwuba uses the satirical tone to expose the embassy officials, who exploit rather than protect. These officials are not merely gatekeepers; they are predators feeding on the desperation of women like Faith, who are seeking freedom from poverty. Through this irony, Chinwuba criticises a system where power is a tool for exploitation. What should be a basic right—access to a visa—

becomes an opportunity for exploitation. The narrative resounds with the irony of those entrusted to provide opportunity instead becoming agents of exploitation.

Chinwuba's illustration of the complicity of border guards and some staff at the Italian Embassy aligns with the systemic exploitation prevalent in many West African nations. This complicity parallels an event in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009), where Dele, a human trafficker, demands sex from Ama as reparation for her refusal to accept his initial proposal to work in Belgium as an "indebted" sex slave. Unigwe captures this violation with Dele's assertion: "I forgive you, I swear! [...] I shall sample you before you go, [as he laughs haughtily and draws Ama closer to his] hardening penis" (Unigwe, 2009, p. 167- 168). This grotesque act exemplifies the horror of sex slavery that emerges from forced labour, highlighting how individuals wielding power, like Dele, perpetuate such abuses.

Chinwuba's representation of Faith Moses and her companions reveals their desperate intent to migrate abroad, creating a profound vulnerability that makes them susceptible to exchanging sex for free passage across borders and sexual favours before appointments for visa interviews. This graphic imagery reflects the broader socio-economic conditions in which many women find themselves, driven by the lure of opportunities that often remain out of reach.

Similarly, Unigwe's portrayal of Ama illustrates how the desire for a better life outside Nigeria can lead to a painful reckoning with one's own gullibility. Initially filled with hope, Ama finds herself engulfed as a victim of exploitation, ultimately coerced into forced sexual acts by Dele. This trajectory underscores the tragic irony that the pursuit of freedom can lead to further entrapment, as

the very dreams that fuel these women's ambitions become instruments of their subjugation.

Chinwuba and Unigwe's narratives highlight the complicity of border guards and some staff at the Italian Embassy, who embody a betrayal of their duty to protect vulnerable individuals. Instead, these officials become instruments of oppression, exploiting the desperation of women like Faith and Ama. The systemic failures evident in these institutions reveal a landscape where corruption and negligence thrive, turning a journey that should offer hope into one fraught with danger.

The interplay of poverty and socio-economic instability in the African context exacerbates the vulnerabilities of women seeking migration. Faith Moses and her companions, like Ama, are emblematic of countless women forced to navigate treacherous paths, where the allure of migration often comes at the cost of their dignity and autonomy. The lack of viable opportunities at home compels them to make unimaginable sacrifices, often in the hope of achieving a semblance of security for themselves and their families.

Through their lived experiences of Faith Moses and her companions, and Ama, Chinwuba and Unigwe reveal the atrocities of trafficking and the systemic failures that perpetuate such coerced sexual exploitation. The characters' experiences highlight the urgent need for comprehensive reforms that address not only the corruption within immigration systems but also the root causes of poverty and inequality that drive individuals to seek migration at any cost. As these narratives unfold, they serve as a clarion call for social justice, urging society to recognise and dismantle the structures of exploitation that enslaves the most vulnerable. In doing so, the authors bring forth the complex interplay

between personal agency, systemic oppression and the dire quest for a better life amidst the menace of socio-economic despair.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba illustrates transnational “forced labour” sex slavery through the traumatic experiences of Faith Moses and her companion, Lovett. Their ordeal begins at Verona’s Piazza Bra arena, where they encounter two Italian police officers due to their lack of visas. Faith recalls:

... all I heard was ‘Documenti.’... We had no residence permit... Lovett and I would be arrested and maybe deported. I wanted to bolt away... We were bundled into the police car... We were now in the outskirts of Verona. Suddenly, the driver veered off the main road into a dirt path. He quenched the flashing lights. He drove on for a while and killed the engines. We were in total darkness. And silence. To cut the story short, they were my first clients in the oldest profession on earth, which had now become mine, and they paid nothing. They took Lovett and I in turns and afterwards abandoned us there to hike our way back home (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 255).

The tone of the personae in the extract depicts a sordid imagery of the police’s systemic negligence of duty on the raiding, detention and exiling illegal immigrants rather than raping and setting them free in return. Again, there is also exemplification of the metaphor of the police as predatory figures who exploit their authority to prey on vulnerable African migrant girls, embodying systemic corruption and sexual exploitation through coercion. Both depictions of imagery and metaphors of the police aligns with Bales (2009) emphasises that, unlike historical transatlantic slavery, these modern-day perpetrators manifest as public entities who exploit their positions to sexually violate individuals lacking travel documentation.

In a similar vein, Chinwuba’s extract exemplifies Bales’ (2009) proposition that for “modern” slavery, or, for that matter, “coerced” sex slavery, “to take root and persist, the complicity of crooked police is a fundamental requirement

[as] [coerced sex] slavery is illegal everywhere” (p. 60). In Njoh and Ayuk-Etang’s (2013) view, the rape that Faith and Lovett endured under these two cops is a historical allusion to the rapes that black women endured under their slave masters during slavery. Faith and Lovett are victims of human trafficking who “usually end up as forced labourers [sic] abroad” (Njoh and Ayuk-Etang, 2013 cited in Ayuk-Etang, 2018, p. 139- 140). Ayuk-Etang (2018, p. 139- 140) believes that Faith and Lovett must submit to their masters' harsh treatment or else they risk being killed or sent back home due to lack of documentation.

In tandem with Faith Moses’ and Lovett’s rape encounter with the Italian police, is that of Joyce [alias Alek, a Sudanese], a protagonist in Unigwe’s *On Black Sisters’ Street* (2009). Unigwe, mentions the disgusting experiences of Joyce’s domestic rape encounter with the Janjaweed militia men during the civil war in South Sudan, where the militia men raped her [Joyce] in turns “pulling out to come on her face. Telling her to ingest it; it was protein. Good food. Fit for an African slave” (Unigwe, 2009, p. 121). This imagery highlights the intersection of gender, race and violence, exposing the atrocities faced by women in conflict and under oppressive regimes.

Together, Chinwuba and Unigwe's narratives confront the cruelties of coerced sexual exploitation and the systemic injustices that allow such abuses to persist, underscoring the urgent need for awareness and action against these forces.

Likewise, Sanusi explores the domestic and transnational forced-sex incidents that her main female protagonist, Eyo, endures in the novel *Eyo* (2009). The rape episode involving Eyo and her father, Wade, set against the backdrop of Ajegunle’s slums in Lagos, Nigeria, exemplifies the dehumanising experience of familial sexual abuse. In tandem, the exploitative encounters

between Eyo and Sam, her foster father in the United Kingdom, alongside Sam's friend, illustrate the nature of transnational compelled sex activities.

Abidemi Sanusi paints a portrait of Eyo and her experiences of rape at the hands of her father, Wade, a paedophile, as despicable. At the tender age of ten, Eyo is subjected to repeated domestic rape. Sanusi conveys the horror of these encounters as Wade insists, “You’re a good girl. Imagine what would have happened if anyone ever found out. And your poor sister?” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 26). This coercive persistence underscores Wade's manipulation, exploiting Eyo's love for her sister, Sade, to extract compliance. Eyo finds herself torn between the desire to escape and the need to protect her sister from Wade's vile intentions, choosing instead to suppress “the urge to break free and run” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 26).

In this context, Bales (2012) posits that slavery thrives in environments steeped in threat, reinforcing the power dynamics at play. He asserts that slaveholders must wield force regularly to maintain their dominance; without such coercion, they become impotent (Bales, 2009, p. 30). Wade's relentless insistence serves as a tool of intimidation, compelling Eyo into submission, echoing Bales' assertion that “in the new slavery, the slave [sex slave] is a consumable item, added to the production process when needed” (Bales, 2012, p. 25). This commodification is captured in Sanusi's narrative, where Eyo's reluctant compliance is evident as she allows her father to violate her will, responding to his demand with a wooden obedience:

Her father gave her a gentle shove towards the mat and she lay down on it, determined not to let her tears fall. Woodenly she took off her nightdress and waited for him. He came down and thrust his hips at her. A whimper escaped Eyo when he took her hand and shoved it inside his trousers. He moaned softly when Eyo

released his manhood and bent over it. She had barely finished before he pushed her back on the mat and roughly parted her legs. When he was spent, Eyo got off the mat. (Sanusi, 2009, p. 25).

In this moment, Wade strips Eyo of her agency, reducing her and her sister, Sade, to mere “sex objects” rather than cherished daughters. This reduction is not merely a personal tragedy but a profound commentary on the societal expectations that often bind African familial relationships. In many cultures, fathers are traditionally seen as protectors and providers, embodying the role of benevolent authority figures. Yet, Sanusi subverts this expectation, revealing how such authority can morph into a guise for coerced sexual exploitation. The cultural value of familial loyalty and respect amplifies Eyo’s predicaments. In a society where daughters are expected to honour their fathers unquestioningly, Eyo’s unfortunate situation highlights the undercurrents of patriarchal control. Wade’s actions serve as a reminder of how familial bonds, which should ideally nurture and protect, can become twisted into instruments of subjugation. In essence, the very ideals of familial duty and respect become chains that bind Eyo, compelling her to navigate a treacherous landscape where fatherly love is weaponised against her.

Moreover, this dynamic reflects broader themes of power within African families, where patriarchal structures often dictate the roles and identities of women. Eyo’s transformation into a mere object of desire underscores the tragic irony of familial love being perverted into a tool of domination. The societal expectation for daughters to submit to their fathers creates an unsettling dichotomy, where the sanctity of family life is overshadowed by the violence of betrayal. Through Eyo's dilemma, Sanusi critiques the ways in which traditional expectations can obscure the realities of abuse, showcasing the painful

complexities of loyalty, love and the quest for autonomy within the confines of a fractured familial structure.

Similarly, the coerced sexual encounters endured by Ama, a victim of sex trafficking in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009), relates to Eyo's dilemma. Unigwe reveals that Ama has been subjected to rape by her stepfather, Brother Cyril, a deputy reverend, for three years—beginning on the night of her eighth birthday and continuing until her eleventh, when she first menstruated. Much like Wade, Brother Cyril employs coercive tactics; he invokes the fifth commandment in the Bible, which implores children to honour their parents, thereby enmeshing Ama in a web of guilt and obedience. Unigwe captures this manipulation as Brother Cyril questions Ama: “What’s the Fifth Commandment?” (Unigwe, 2009, p. 114). Sarcastically, the answer—“Honour thy father and mother” (Unigwe, 2009, p. 114)—becomes a perverse justification for Ama’s violation, compelling her to comply with her foster father’s depraved desires.

Comparing the ordeals of Eyo and Ama in the narratives, Sanusi and Unigwe bare the actuality where paternal figures, instead of providing protection, become agents of destruction. As Longdet and Ezekulie (2022) suggest, these experiences “[question] the agency of the father figures who metaphorically ought to be protective but conversely become synonymous with destruction” (p. 125). In this exploration of coerced familial abuse, both authors elucidate the tragic irony that those who should safeguard their wards instead exploit them, leaving scars that linger throughout their lives.

Sanusi explores the transnational forced sexual experiences of Eyo, who encounters Sam—a UK citizen and part-time human trafficker—upon her

arrival in the United Kingdom. Eyo's exploitation mirrors the familial rape traumas inflicted by her father, Wade, in Ajegunle, Lagos, Nigeria. However, in the UK, the nature of her abuse evolves; she is sometimes forced to watch pornography, role-play sexual acts, or endure physical assaults from Sam while he is intoxicated. Sanusi notes that Sam develops a similar uncontrolled desire for Eyo as Wade did back in Nigeria. In London, Sam's frequent and lecherous gaze at Eyo's "ripening buds of her breasts, [and] sprinkling of pubic hair" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 90) ultimately leads him to violate her. Eyo's endurance of such trauma aligns with Ligaga's (2019) assertion that she is "presented as a young girl child in perpetual risk of male-inflicted violence" (p. 78). This perspective suggests that Eyo's past experiences of coerced rape in Nigeria foreshadow her continued suffering in London. The weight of this trauma acts like an albatross around her neck, marking her as someone fated to endure further abuse, much like a slave subjected to corporeal violence. Sanusi foreshadows Eyo's potential development of post-traumatic stress disorder due to her repeated mistreatment. In Nigeria, Eyo is regularly raped to protect her younger sister, Sade; this cycle of abuse continues in the UK, where Sam treats her as a mere object for sexual gratification.

Consequently, Eyo begins to see herself as a "robot ... because [they] robots couldn't feel anything" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 97). This self-perception drives her to endure the abuse she faces, aligning with the advice given by her mother, Mama Olufunmi, and family friend Mama Fola, who counsel her to "endure because [she is] a woman [and] that is what women do" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 26). Eyo's identification as a "robot" serves as a symbol of her emotional detachment and the dehumanising effects of her traumatic experiences. It reflects a coping

mechanism in a world that strips her of agency and autonomy. By equating herself to a robot, Eyo embodies a state of emotional numbness, suggesting that she has been forced to suppress her feelings to survive the relentless abuse.

This metaphor “the robot,” named after Eyo critiques societal expectations placed on women, particularly within African cultures, where enduring hardship is often seen as a virtue. Eyo's adoption of this identity reveals her internalisation of these beliefs, reinforcing the notion that women must suffer in silence, further entrenching the cycle of abuse. Ultimately, Eyo's "robot" self-perception symbolises her profound disconnection from her own humanity, exposing the psychological rifts left by trauma and the societal pressures that perpetuate her suffering. This symbolism illustrates the broader implications of exploitation and the cost of survival in a world that often views individuals as mere instruments for others' desires. As such, even when Eyo is subjected to degrading sexual acts, such as when Sam discharges his semen into her mouth and instructs her to spit it out, she exhibits a disturbing compliance. This is exemplified when it is noted that she “left and came back, standing by the door, awaiting orders, her mind and body on automatic mode, just like they were whenever she did it with Papa” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 90). This portrayal highlights the erosion of Eyo's agency within the context of transnational slavery, where African migrant children often find themselves at the mercy of surrogate parents abroad who exploit their vulnerabilities. In such a landscape, these surrogate figures, under the guise of care and protection, manipulate the innocence and desperation of these children for their own gain.

Eyo's disturbing compliance serves as a reflection of the broader phenomenon in which the fractured identities of migrant children are shaped by

the individuals who wield power over them. The dynamics of exploitation render them not merely as wards but as commodities—objects of use in a system that thrives on their subjugation. This tragedy underscores the urgent need for understanding of the socio-economic and cultural forces that allow such predatory relationships to flourish, revealing the painful intersection of hope and despair in the lives of those seeking refuge in foreign lands.

In another scenario, Sanusi illustrates how Sam commodifies Eyo by introducing her to a white guest after recognising her capacity for sexual acts. Sanusi recounts Sam's threatening tone: "Eyo...this is my friend. I've told him a lot of good things about you.... If you cause me any trouble with this man... Anyway, we both know what happened the last time you gave me trouble, don't we?" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 103). This tone emphasises the power imbalance between slaver and victim, reflecting the observations of Bales (2009, p. 30) and Weisbrodt (2002, p. 34), who note that slavers often resort to force to maintain control. In this exploitative relationship, slavers employ physical violence and threats to instil fear and ensure compliance from their sex slaves, just as in Eyo's case.

This dynamic is replicated in Amma Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995), where Mara faces similar brutality in Germany at the hands of her husband, Akobi. Darko narrates a coerced sex act between the couple where Akobi orders, "Remove it quick, quick, pointing to [Mara's] trouser... Signalled with his right finger that [Mara] should kneel" (Darko, 1995, p. 84). This commanding gesture underscores the imbalance of power often present in relationships shaped by traditional African gender norms, where male authority frequently dictates the terms of intimacy. As Oppong-Adjei (2016, p. 13)

observes, in sexual relationships, the dominant partner exerts a greater influence over the subordinate partner. This perspective is illustrated in Darko's narrative, where he recalls Mara's comment: "and I knelt down. I felt him enter me from the back behind" (Darko, 1995, p. 84). This depiction evokes the cultural expectations surrounding submission within marriage, where a woman's compliance is often viewed as an obligation rather than a choice. Like Eyo, Mara is subjected to physical aggression and sexual exploitation, reinforcing the theme of domination within these relationships. The portrayal of these intimate moments illustrates how societal structures can perpetuate violence and control, transforming acts of intimacy into mechanisms of oppression.

In both narratives, the forced nature of sexual encounters illustrates the lack of autonomy experienced by the victims. The power disparity between characters like Sam and Eyo or Akobi and Mara, reveals the harsh reality of coerced sexual slavery, where the dominant partner retains complete control. This exploitation is evident in both the physical abuse and the emotional manipulation employed by their abusers, reflecting a broader commentary on the systemic nature of such violence. Through the narratives, Sanusi and Darko disclose the brutal realities faced by women caught in cycles of abuse, offering a critique of the societal structures that enable such exploitation. The tragic fates of Eyo and Mara serve as a powerful reminder of the urgent need to address the horrors of coerced sexual slavery and the inequalities that perpetuate the act.

In sum, coerced sex slavery is a form of exploitation where vulnerable individuals are forced into non-consensual sexual acts through manipulation, threats, or violence. Chinwuba addresses this issue from a grown woman's perspective, focusing on the emotional and psychological impact on female

victims and their internal struggles from an institutionalised context. In contrast, Sanusi examines the situation from the girl-child purview, depicting the specific vulnerabilities and innocence of young girls in familial and surrogate settings.

Further, both authors show the systemic nature of coerced sex slavery; Chinwuba emphasises the complex dynamics between women and their exploiters, portraying women as both victims and perpetrators, while Sanusi underscores the brutal control mechanisms targeting children. Despite their differing focuses, both narratives converge on the violation of human dignity, illustrating how coercion transcends cultural boundaries and is rooted in societal structures. A trait that Bales (2009) reiterates, has been constant throughout “human history” (p. 30). Together, both authors emphasise the urgent need for awareness and action against this atrocity.

3.2.2. Debt bondage [‘Indebted’ sex slavery]

Debt bondage, as defined by Bales (2009, p. 33) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 14), is a form of slavery where individuals are compelled to work to repay a debt. The conditions of their servitude are often vague, and the debt can last indefinitely, with the person's labour failing to diminish the original obligation (Bales, 2009, p. 33 & Weissbrodt, 2002, p. 14). Bales (2009, p. 33) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 14) aver that the situation can be inherited, trapping generations in a cycle of exploitation. In many instances, the life of the debtor serves as collateral, meaning the master retains ownership of their work until the debt is repaid.

Bales (2005, p. 1) argues that slavery is driven largely by profit, indicating that sex slavery, much like debt bondage, exploits vulnerable individuals for financial gain. This extortion associated with debt-bound sex slavery is

illustrated in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), where traffickers, or "madams," exploit indebted sex slaves. For instance, Madam Lizzy exploits her girls by imposing heavy deductions from their earnings, as Chinwuba describes:

At the end of each month, Lizzy would subtract two hundred thousand lira per girl for meals which she prepared for them, three hundred and fifty thousand for rent, and one hundred and fifty thousand for utilities, which included the cell phone she rented out to them, and toiletries like common soap, common toothpaste, and sanitary towels. Two hundred thousand lira was also deducted as rent for the grounds [called the joint] where they stood. So at the end of the month, Madam Lizzy would subtract nine hundred thousand lira from the earnings of each girl. Whatever remained, she would enter into the payment ledger, under the girl's name (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 75).

This excerpt exemplifies Bales' (2009: 14) and Weissbrodt's (2002, p. 33) critiques of the deceptive accounting practices of traffickers. Lizzy's manipulation keeps her victims, like Lovett and Faith, in perpetual debt while she profits from their exploitation. Lovett, Faith, and the other girls are confronted with a world where hope is subverted and autonomy is sacrificed for profit. In this treacherous space, every semblance of agency is robbed away; the weight of their debts is not merely financial but also an emotional and psychological burden that crushes their spirits. The reality they face—a world designed to exploit rather than empower—highlights the broader societal complicity in such injustices.

Lovett, a character in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), embodies the lived experiences of girls entrapped in debt bondage. Chinwuba narrates that Lizzy acquires Lovett from another madam, transforming her into a mere commodity. As a debt-bonded sex slave, "she owed ninety million lira" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 116), a figure that does not even account for the additional payments she must

make for her brothel, food and other needs. Lovett works tirelessly, often without rest, lamenting, “It was a hard life” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 116). Bales (2009, p. 31) notes that slaves are forced to work for others’ profit and cannot escape; Lovett’s situation exemplifies this inescapability, as she remains trapped under the extortive demands of her madam.

In a desperate bid for freedom, Lovett hopes that a wealthy man will pay off her debts. Her servitude is further solidified by an oath sworn to Lizzy, binding her life to the terms of her servitude: “With her life and her child’s life” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 116). This piquant detail reveals the lengths to which Lovett must go to seek liberation, highlighting the entrenchment of exploitative systems that deprive individuals of their humanity and autonomy. Bales (2009, p. 59) emphasises that threats and abuse ensure sex slaves see no viable escape from their predicament. Lovett’s advice to Faith further underscores the exploitative nature of their work: “Remember, we do not do this for fun... Time is money in this job. The client is not your boyfriend, so do not waste time on” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 248).

This reminder serves not only as a survival tactic but also as a narrative on the exploitative conditions the sex slaves face, where emotional connections are replaced by transactional relationships. Their traffickers have silenced their voices, leaving them isolated and vulnerable. Bales (2009, p. 66) points out that many women, upon arriving at a trafficker's brothel, are informed of debts incurred for their journey, which forces them into a relentless cycle of servitude. This cycle perpetuates their subjugation, trapping them in a system that thrives on their despair and helplessness. Lizzy’s commands further illustrate this point. She instructs the girls to prioritize profit over personal connections:

You have a debt to pay. And remember, you are not doing this for love or for fun. It should not last more than three minutes. Once the man has released, leave him; go, start hustling again for the next client. The money the client pays is for one use only, not two. If he wants a second round again, make him pay again first. And make sure he pays before service. Money in hand first. If he does not pay, no do. Remember to bend down forward and let him do it from the back. That style is faster for them. No need for underwear. Time is money. Do not waste time on foreplay. Any extra service attracts an extra charge. This is business (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 72).

Lizzy's authoritative tone "You have a debt to pay. And remember, you are not doing this for love or for fun. It should not last more than three minutes. Once the man has released," (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 72) reveals how the female body is commodified, reduced to a mere tool for profit. Bales (2009, p. 58) notes that enslaved victims face constant violence and disease, reflected by Lizzy's treatment of those who resist, such as Lovett. When Lovett dares to assert her autonomy and flee, Lizzy's response is severe; she traces and assassinates Lovett, sending a clear message to others contemplating escape. Lovett's desperate act is captured in her final message, where she states, "having paid over seventy million lire, she felt she had sufficiently acquitted her debt and is leaving to fend for herself" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 264).

This moment illustrates the lethal consequences of indebted sex slavery, where the pursuit of freedom can lead to death. Lovett's assertion of her autonomy is met with violence, highlighting that any attempt to reclaim agency is often met with severe retribution. This cycle of exploitation and violence not only reveals the precariousness of their existence but also serves as a reminder of how entrenched systems of power operate to maintain control over vulnerable individuals. In this context, the theme of violence becomes inextricably linked to the lives of these women, where exploitation is not just a matter of economic

subjugation but also a matter of life and death. The narrative critiques a system that reduces human beings to mere commodities, exposing the harsh consequences faced by those who dare to resist. Kara's (2009) assertion that “only the tiniest fraction musters the courage to escape” (p. 16) finds affirmation in the relentless cycle of exploitation endured by indebted sex slaves. Chinwuba's reflection that “it was slavery all over again” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 177) depicts the inescapable grasp of debt bondage, a torment from which escape seems but a distant fantasy.

The theme of violence and betrayal is also explored in Ajaegbo's *Sarah House* (2013), where Tega, a sex slave, expresses her despair: “I can't take this anymore” (Ajaegbo, 2013, p. 219). Tega's attempt to flee results in her capture and death, mirroring the fates of Lovett. Both novels illustrate how traffickers maintain control over their victims, creating a virtual prison of debt and despair. Tega's struggle resonates with Lovett's plight; both women's experiences are emblematic of a broader commentary on the systemic dehumanisation present in sex trafficking. In this context, the violence experienced by these women is not merely an isolated experience but a reflection of a societal framework that normalises exploitation. The interconnected systems of economic, cultural and legal structures contribute to their commodification, making violence a tool for maintaining control. Insufficient legal protections and cultural attitudes that objectify women further entrench their oppression, while social networks often fail to support victims. Thus, the exploration of violence in both texts highlight not only personal tragedies but also a collective struggle against an oppressive system that seeks to silence and control. Through the narratives of Lovett and

Tega, it is evident that societal structures—economic, cultural and legal structures contribute to the ongoing cycle of violence and subjugation.

In *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi portrays the experiences of Eyo, a young girl entrapped in human trafficking. Her narrative resonates with Mozini's (2005; p. 84) assertion, as cited by Ligaga (2019), that extreme poverty often drives women into slavery. Eyo's plight exemplifies this reality; she is handed over to Femi, a trafficker who promises her a better life abroad. Initially, Femi's actions are masked by a façade of care, as he pays Wade's rent to facilitate Eyo's trafficking to London, leading vulnerable women into dangerous situations by exploiting their hopes and dreams. This dynamic highlights the tragic irony of their circumstances: in pursuit of a brighter future, girls like Eyo become trapped in a cycle of exploitation.

The search for a better life frequently results in girls like Eyo falling prey to traffickers who impose overwhelming debts upon them. Bales (2009, p. 43) notes that families, driven by poverty, may auction their children or accept advances based on anticipated earnings. Eyo's situation reflects this reality as she is sold into sex slavery, reduced to a mere commodity. Sanusi captures this dehumanisation through Madame Stella's declaration: "You don't steal from me, Eyo. Everything here is mine" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 132). This statement underscores Stella's view of Eyo as an object, effectively stripping her of her identity and humanity, which reinforces the power imbalance central to trafficking.

Bales (2009, p. 48) describes modern slavery as an enterprise rooted in exploitation and abuse, a characterisation that aligns with Eyo's experience. Stella treats her like a "caged bitch," monitoring her to ensure she satisfies

clients effectively. Sanusi writes, “Stella wants to ensure that her sex slave, Eyo, is properly ‘servicing’ her clients” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 181). This observation highlights the reality of traffickers' all-encompassing control, as they reduce their victims to mere tools for profit, devoid of agency or personal connection.

The theme of debt bondage further unfolds when Stella denies Eyo any chance of liberation, opting instead to sell her to a new pimp, Johnny, prolonging her suffering. Sanusi illustrates this betrayal poignantly: “Stella poisons Eyo with ‘Diazepam for a few hours’” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 195), emphasising the lengths to which traffickers will go to maintain control over their victims. This act of poisoning symbolises the insidious nature of trafficking, where even the promise of liberation is twisted into another form of control.

Eyo's ordeal resonates with the experiences of characters in Adimora-Eziegbo's *Trafficked* (2008), reflecting a shared plight among trafficked women. Efe recounts her traumatic experience: “Madam Gold sold [her] to a pimp—a white man—after four years of slaving for her” (Adimora-Eziegbo, 2008, p. 100). This betrayal not only highlights personal suffering but also reveals a broader socio-economic structure that commodifies vulnerable women. The intersection of race, gender and economic desperation creates fertile ground for exploitation, as societal norms often prioritise profit over human dignity, thereby perpetuating a cycle of abuse.

Similarly, Nneoma reflects on her harsh reality: “Life is hell in Rome—we are always walking the night selling sex to Italian men and foreigners” (Adimora-Eziegbo, 2008, p. 128–129). Her words underscore the existence faced by many trafficked women, showing a cultural acceptance of violence and

commodification. In these narratives, women's bodies are treated as instruments for profit, reinforcing the idea that systemic issues—such as poverty, lack of education and entrenched gender inequalities—drive women into the hands of exploiters. This systemic exploitation is perpetuated by a culture that devalues women, viewing them as disposable resources rather than individuals with rights and aspirations.

Moreover, Chinwuba and Sanusi's narratives expose the inadequacies of legal and social systems designed to protect these women. The absence of effective legal frameworks leaves victims vulnerable to traffickers and abusers, while societal stigma surrounding victims of sex trafficking often silences them. This creates an environment where their suffering remains hidden and their rights unprotected, making it difficult for them to seek help or reclaim their agency.

Norridge (2003) connects these experiences to a broader socio-political context, arguing that those in power often strip their victims of humanity to inflict suffering (p. 8). This assertion resonates with Bales' (2009) observations about the commodification of human beings. The pimps and madams depicted in both *Eyo* (2009) and *Trafficked* (2008) treat their victims as mere "sex objects," devoid of respect or dignity. This treatment manifests in the dehumanisation of women, where their value is measured solely by their ability to generate profit, thus perpetuating the cycle of exploitation.

In conclusion, the narratives of Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) and Adimora-Eziegbo's *Trafficked* (2008) characters reveal the systemic failures—social, economic and cultural—that perpetuate cycles of exploitation. These narratives do not only highlight the individual struggles of trafficked women but also call

for a critical examination of the structures that allow such injustices to exist. They urge society to confront the realities of trafficking and advocate for systemic change that prioritizes the rights and dignity of women, thereby dismantling the very systems that enable such exploitation to flourish.

Nevertheless, Johnny, later hired by Madame Stella as Eyo's pimp, derogatorily refers to her as "an animal" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 202). This dehumanising metaphor reflects not just Johnny's contempt for Eyo's humanity but positions him as a modern-day swindler or master of slaves. By equating Eyo to a mere animal, Johnny signifies his perception of her as a possession—an object he has acquired from Madam Stella. This mindset reveals his readiness to inflict both corporeal and sexual abuse upon her, aiming to break her will and spirit. Bales (2009) observes that this is a common *modus operandi* among pimps and traffickers, who employ heinous acts such as rape as tools of domination and enslavement. The term "deflowering," as Bales describes it, encapsulates the abhorrent ritual wherein traffickers strip newly acquired victims of their dignity, coercing them into accepting their roles as debt-bonded sex slaves (Bales, 2009, p. 56).

In this context, Johnny's language reflects an entrenched societal view that commodifies women, reducing them to mere objects for male gratification. This dehumanisation echoes broader cultural narratives in which women's bodies are often objectified, revealing the patriarchal structures that permit such exploitation. The metaphor of Eyo as an animal not only reinforces Johnny's power but also critiques a socio-political landscape that allows such atrocities to flourish unchecked.

This ritual of "deflowering" is illustrated in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* (2008), where the female protagonist, Nita, who is shy of men, is subjected to brutal rape by a stranger while under the care of her cruel pimps, Slim and Fatty. Similarly, in *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi writes that Johnny "liked to break in [deflower] new girls himself, to test them out and iron out any difficulties that might ensue" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 199). The purpose of this rite, as Sanusi articulates, is to erase "any spiritedness left in the women" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 199). Following this brutal initiation, "Johnny [also] spent the next three days with Eyo, without cause for concern" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 199), reinforcing his control over her.

Sanusi's depiction of "deflowering" serves as a haunting reminder of the violent initiation rituals that many women endure within trafficking systems. This brutal act not only signifies a loss of autonomy but also reflects cultural practices where women's worth is tied to their sexuality. The portrayal of such exploitation in both texts underscore a pervasive culture of violence against women, highlighting how societal norms perpetuate the cycle of abuse.

Sanusi portrays the horrors that Eyo endures under Johnny's tyranny, who regards her as both an animal and an indebted sex slave. He compels her to "service" a multitude of men, reducing her to a mere vessel of flesh. This revulsion is palpable in the protagonist's voice as she recounts Johnny's mockery, questioning: "How many men has Eyo had sex with? ... Hundreds? Thousands? Tens of thousands?" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 273). Furthermore, Johnny ensnares Eyo in a sordid scheme of pornography, forcing her to witness recordings of her own degradation as punishment for any perceived disloyalty. In an act of desperate coping, Eyo renames herself "Jungle," a stoic reflection of her internalised trauma.

The systematic degradation Eyo faces mirror the broader socio-political issues of objectification and exploitation prevalent in many societies. By reducing Eyo to a mere peddler of her flesh, Johnny embodies the ruthless commodification of women, which is often justified in cultures that prioritise profit over dignity. This speaks to a political economy that exploits vulnerability, where women like Eyo are stripped of their humanity and agency.

The parallels between Eyo's in Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) suffering and that of Nneoma in Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked* (2008) are striking. Nneoma endures brutal treatment at the hands of her new pimp, Baron, who embodies sadism. She recounts, "he rapes and beats me. I refuse when customers demand oral sex and insist; they use condoms, and I'm sometimes assaulted for this. Baron locks me up in the flat and does not allow me to go out except when he takes me with him" (Adimora-Ezeigbo, 2008: 132). These narratives expose the reality of sex slavery, where the lines between captor and victim blur, and the very essence of humanity is stripped away. Both Eyo and Nneoma's experiences highlight the intersection of gender and power within a socio-cultural framework that normalises violence against women. The sadistic control exerted by their pimps illuminates a political structure that often fails to protect the most vulnerable members of society. This systemic failure allows for the perpetuation of abuse, as victims are rendered powerless by their circumstances.

Sanusi further supports Bales' (2009, p. 31) assertion that debt bondage slaves are often aware that their servitude is illegal. However, physical restraint becomes unnecessary once they begin to identify with their captors, having been psychologically coerced into acceptance (Bales, 2009, p. 31). This notion is vividly illustrated in Eyo's plight, where she submits to her circumstances

without opposition, reflecting a complete surrender to her exploiters. Bales (2009, p. 31) posits that victims of relentless sexual abuse come to view their torment as an unpleasant yet inevitable aspect of life, a sentiment echoed in Sanusi's narration. Even after Father Steven and Sister Mary liberate Eyo from Johnny's grasp, she finds herself longing to return to him, illustrating how her identity has been intertwined with her captor. Sanusi poignantly writes, "Eyo wondered what she was doing [there] when all she wanted was to be with Johnny, sleeping with up to ten men a night, who paid Johnny her boyfriend, protector, lover and bodyguard for the privilege" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 268). This quote underscores Bales's assertion, demonstrating how Johnny's relentless abuse erases Eyo's sense of self, warping her perception of reality into a twisted illusion of devotion.

The psychological manipulation that Eyo experiences speak to a broader socio-political context where victims internalise their oppression, often leading to a false sense of loyalty towards their abusers. This phenomenon is indicative of a culture in which violence becomes normalised, and where the psychological scars of exploitation run. By portraying Eyo's longing for Johnny even after her liberation, Sanusi critiques the societal structures that fail to acknowledge the complex realities of trafficking victims. Abidemi Sanusi also highlights the exploitative dynamics between Eyo and Stella, encapsulating the plight of migrant girls held captive by their madams and pimps. These circumstances resonate with Weissbrodt's (2002, p. 16) claim that female migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to slavery-like exploitation, as they navigate the treacherous spaces of sex slavery and forced labour. Weissbrodt (2002) notes the tactics employed by madams and pimps, including confiscating passports

and essentially holding individuals in servitude (p. 16). In the cases of Eyo, her forced entry into Europe renders them targets of relentless sexual exploitation, their fates bound by fraudulent accounting practices that perpetuate her status as an "indebted" sex slave.

The exploitation of migrant women like Eyo underscores the socio-political realities of globalisation, where economic desperation drives vulnerable populations into the hands of exploiters. The confiscation of passports and other coercive tactics employed by traffickers reflect a broader system of control that thrives on the marginalisation of women, reinforcing the notion that their bodies are commodities to be traded. This exploitation is further entrenched by socio-economic disparities that make women particularly susceptible to trafficking.

Moreso, the narratives of Eyo in *Eyo* (2009) and Nita in *Trafficked* (2008) expose debt bondage as a form of slavery that ensnares victims in an ever-increasing cycle of exploitation. Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002) elucidate how traffickers fabricate charges that inflate these debts, often extending them to subsequent generations. This brutal and inhumane practice not only denies sex slaves their freedom but also obliterates their dignity, entrenching them in a life from which escape seems all but impossible. The cyclical nature of exploitation, rooted in systemic failures, calls for urgent reflection and action. It compels society to confront these injustices and advocate for mechanisms that protect the rights and dignity of women, challenging the status quo that has long enabled such atrocities to persist.

From the analysis, the interconnectedness of coerced sex slavery with indebted sex slavery arises from the interconnectedness of socio-economic factors such as poverty, lack of education, high unemployment and gender

inequality that lead to, and exploit vulnerability. Traffickers often lure individuals with false promises of employment or a better life, only to trap them using inflated debts. Once entrapped, victims find themselves in a relentless cycle, where each payment is manipulated to ensure they remain in servitude. The debts can be passed down to the next generation through exploitative contracts, effectively binding families in a perpetual state of bondage

The intertwining of coerced sex slavery with debt bondage in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) reveals a profound commentary on socio-economic injustices. Both texts illustrate how factors such as poverty, lack of education, high unemployment and gender inequality create vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba presents individuals ensnared by deceitful promises. The narrative emphasises how characters, often from impoverished backgrounds, are lured into exploitation where fabricated debts become the chains binding them to servitude. This relentless cycle of debt not only highlights the personal tragedies of the characters but also serves as a critique of the socio-economic structures that facilitate such exploitation. Similarly, Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) explores the pervasive nature of gender inequality and societal norms that normalise violence. Through the experiences of female characters trapped in coercive situations, the text underscores how their lack of education and limited economic opportunities render them vulnerable to traffickers. The narrative illustrates the psychological and emotional toll of being ensnared in a system where debts are manipulated to ensure ongoing servitude.

Both authors employ their narratives as a lens to examine the broader implications of debt bondage and coerced sex slavery, prompting readers to

confront the systemic issues at play. The weak legal protections depicted in both texts further emphasise the urgent need for societal change, as they reflect the harsh realities faced by victims. Through literary criticism, readers appreciate how *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009) not only tell individual stories but also challenge readers to address the socio-economic factors that perpetuate such dehumanising practices.

In conclusion, sex slavery manifested through debt bondage represents a grotesque form of modern slavery, entrapping its victims through false accounting methods designed to exploit their vulnerabilities. These women, stripped of agency and autonomy, find themselves bounded by debts that increase relentlessly, often high beyond any hope of repayment. As Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002) elucidate, traffickers and slave masters concoct inflated charges, employing deceitful tactics that further entrap their victims in a cycle of servitude. The insidious nature of this system becomes even more alarming when one considers that these debts can be inherited by the next generation—often through coercion and manipulation, the children of enslaved women may be born into a life predetermined by their parents' debts, perpetuating a lineage of exploitation. Indebted sex slavery is not merely a violation of freedom; it obliterates the very essence of dignity, reducing individuals to commodities devoid of worth beyond their utility. This brutal practice, entrenched in socio-economic disparities and systemic failures, cries out for urgent reflection and action. It challenges everyone to confront the cruel realities of a world where the innocent is entrapped in a cycle of suffering, urging society to dismantle the structures that enable such inhumanity and to advocate for the rights and dignity of all women.

3.2.3 Contract slavery ['Indentured' sex slavery]

This type of slavery functions based on promising employment but enslaving potential employees as slaves (in the case of this thesis, sex slaves) once they arrive at their respective jobs (Bales, 2009, p. 34). Weissbrodt (2002) claims that contract slavery is comparable to bondage labour; therefore, he combines this kind of slavery with bondage labour (debt bondage). Bales (2009) similarly, reiterates that contract slavery occurs when potential employees who have been assured employment are enticed, duped, or defrauded into slavery (sex slavery in the context of this thesis) through contracts. Bales (2009) reiterates that a key function of this kind of slavery is the introduction of contracts, which enhance this current form of slavery by making it look legal and placing the slaves (sex slaves) under conditions of intense fear through violence, restricted movement, and effectively-remaining unpaid or underpaid (p. 34).

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Faith Moses, the main female character is portrayed as vulnerable to trafficking due to her living conditions. Chinwuba depicts Faith's home as a trap, symbolising the inevitability of poverty. Faith's home—is described as a congested space — “twelve rooms housing over sixty souls” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 29)—is called a “face-me-I-fight-you” building (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 29), a metaphor for chaos, lack of privacy, and constant struggle. The narrator describes two pit latrines and washrooms at one end of the house, as well as a communal kitchen where food smells mix with smoke and the stench from the toilets. Chinwuba writes that the stench “joined the urine and toilet odour to form an acrid permanent airlessness that threatened to suffocate the occupants of the house” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 29). This odour is

described as “a smell of poverty: a mélange of kitchen and septic tank smells, which meant that one was too poor to keep the two apart” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 29). These details satirically show how poverty becomes suffocating, leaving no room for hope or escape. The metaphor “smell of poverty” illustrates how poverty touches every part of Faith’s life, reducing her survival to indignity. Chinwuba’s imagery of Faith’s household signifies a satire that mocks Faith’s poor living conditions, one that Faith regards as the norm rather than an anomaly. The imagery on Faith’s household unveils the tragedy of normalised poverty, borne of systemic failure. This satire ridicules a society where neglect and corruption have turned suffering into an unchallenged fate of life beyond resignation.

Similarly, in *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi shows how poverty dehumanises. Eyo’s home, is described as a “face-me-I-face-you” building (Sanusi, 2009, p. 8), a metaphor for confrontation and survival, with neighbours forced into constant proximity. Further, Sanusi narrates that “[Eyo’s family] building lacked electricity, running water and a bathroom. The *shalanga*, the latrine pit, was also in the background, in the windowless hut, so people didn’t hang out too long there”(Sanusi, 2009, p. 8–9). The absence of essentials like electricity, water, or bathrooms shows both physical hardship and neglect. Sanusi’s depiction of the “shalanga” or pit latrine, evokes a both satire and metaphor mocking a crude structure symbolising the indignity of poverty. Thereby, Sanusi’s satirical and metaphoric imagery of Eyo’s environ depicts calling such environ as a home ironically underlines the disparity between basic needs versus the reality of a poor livelihood.

Sanusi also ironically portrays young Eyo's life. Thus, the image of a ten-year-old girl cheerfully calling on a busy road—"Ice water! Ice water! Don't let the heat of the day take you down! Buy ice water!" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 3). In the except, Eyo's lively cry contrasts with the poverty forcing her into child labour. This irony critiques a society that normalises such exploitation, where a child's innocence is overshadowed by survival's demands. This irony portrays an African context where systemic issues and economic hardships often push children into adult roles prematurely. The normalisation of such exploitation highlights society's failure to protect the innocence and rights of children, ensuring that survival comes at the cost of their childhood.

Both authors' aforementioned illustrations on the livelihoods of their female protagonists depict them [Faith Moses and Eyo] as impoverished people. As cited by Bales (2009), an individual living in poverty is one whose "Life is without options. Every action must be aimed at day-to-day survival, and even that goal may be unattainable. Desperation is the norm, and families are ready to do anything to survive" (p. 56). Therefore, the descriptions of Faith Moses and Eyo's residences show their pauperess states and their desperate engagement in meagre jobs for their survival. Regarding poverty, Kara (2011) and Nutsukpo (2019) claim that poverty is a key factor in the increased recruitment of Africans into sex slavery overseas. Kara (2011) and Nutsukpo (2019) contend that traffickers prey on the vulnerable populations of Africa, especially women and children, who suffer from poverty and deprivation. The contentions by Kara (2011) and Nutsukpo (2019) are evidenced in the novels, *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009). In the novels, Chinwuba and Sanusi portray the female protagonists, Faith Moses and Eyo, as victims of their dismal

circumstances, who are lured into sex slavery by false promises of a better life abroad. The novels depict the harsh realities of living in slums and overcrowded households, which make the characters susceptible to exploitation and abuse. Through Chinwuba and Sanusi's narratives, the authors expose the horrors of human trafficking and the commodification of female protagonist's bodies under "indentured" sex slavery.

Contract slavery, in Bales' (2009) opinion, is mostly established by the signing of or consenting to contracts. With the contract signatures and agreements obtained through deception, threats, or fraud. Similar arguments by Bales (2009) are clear in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009). Further, Bales (2012, p. 21) avers that contract, as in contract slavery, have dual applicability in modern slavery. False contracts used in contract slavery, in the opinion of Bales, serve the aims of "entrapment and concealment" (2012, p. 26). Bales (2012) also opines that false contracts are offered to people in desperate need of paid labour. These contracts are a strong inducement to board the waggon that would transport these desperate individuals into slavery. Bales (2012) emphasises that in many countries, a well-spoken and well-dressed recruiting agent with genuine and legal-looking paperwork attracts people from rural poor areas (p. 21). Convinced that perhaps the contract ensures decent service that clearly defines the worker's legal rights and remuneration, the prospective slave agrees willingly, thus committing himself or herself to indentured servitude (Bales, 2012, p. 21).

Bales (2012, p. 21) emphasises that after using phoney contracts to attract employees into slavery and taking them far enough away from their families where violence may be used to control them, the contract is sometimes thrown

out. However, Bales (2012) reiterates that fake contracts are far more likely to be kept in most cases because the slaveholder has other auxiliary usages for them (p. 21). The views of Bales (2012, p. 21) resonates in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), as Chinwuba characterises Faith Moses as a member of the lower class, a status that makes her an ideal target for traffickers. Her introduction as a dropout and someone living in poverty sets the stage for her vulnerability. This vulnerability is exploited by Madam Lizzy Johnson, a former schoolmate turned pimp, whose role in Faith's entrapment into 'contract' sex slavery is pivotal. Faith describes Lizzy as she stares at her indicating that Lizzy "was a woman of Faith's age, albeit of a higher social standing, judging from her apparel. From head to toe, she looked "supplicated" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 41). The description of Lizzy projects an imagery. The imagery exaggerates her overall impression and shows how it affects every part of her—her outfit, demeanour and overall presentation. This highlights one side of her duality: the impression of complete poise, while concealing the other—a sex trafficker.

Lizzy's character embodies the duality of traffickers—both alluring and predatory—making her a metaphor for the deceptive promises that ensnare victims. Chinwuba uses Lizzy's flamboyant appearance and wealth as a satirical critique of the allure traffickers present. Lizzy's outward glamour, described as "gorgeous" and indicative of her success, becomes a façade masking the moral corruption of her actions. This irony is central to the narrative, as Lizzy's wealth, gained through exploitation, is what captivates Faith. Lizzy's exaggerated anecdotes about her life abroad further heighten this irony. Lizzy's promises of employment in Italy, such as working in a hospital ward or washing dishes in a "big, posh executive restaurant" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 44), are laced

with hyperbole. These claims, while enticing, serve as a metaphor for the false narratives traffickers orchestrate to manipulate their victims. The imagery Lizzy employs to describe opportunities in Italy—such as picking “tomatoes or other fruits on a farm” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 44)—is deceptive, concealing exploitation. Lizzy’s assurances of a “good” salary and a minimum wage of “one point million four lira, roughly seven hundred dollars” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 45) are presented with certainty; however, these assurances are exaggerations of falsity, as they lure victims into a false sense of opportunity while concealing the real nature of forced labour, abuse and exploitation migrant girls will face.

This use of exaggeration reflects Lizzy’s manipulative tactics by exploiting her victims’ desperation and hope for a better future. It shows the societal structures that perpetuate such deceit, where economic hardship, lack of employment opportunities and systemic inequalities create an environment favourable for traffickers to operate. In the African context, such manipulation thrives in a society where poverty and limited access to education render individuals vulnerable to trafficking. Lizzy’s exaggerations underscore the failure of societal systems to protect the vulnerable, allowing such deceit to flourish. Thus, the promises of wealth and opportunity do not serve as tools of manipulation but shows the problems in society that allow the cycle of exploitation. The aforementioned view is depicted in Faith’s astonished response, “Osanubua! ... seventy thousand a month! Just washing plates, or picking tomatoes!” (Chinwuba, 2003, p 45), reflecting her naivety and desperation. Her exclamation underscores the effectiveness of Lizzy’s manipulation, as Faith’s desire to escape poverty makes her unaware of the potential dangers. The irony in Faith’s reaction lies in her belief that such

opportunities represent a rewarding experience, when in reality, they are a gateway to enslavement.

Chinwuba's narrative subtly critiques the systemic conditions that enable such exploitation. Lizzy's ability to manipulate Faith's aspirations and vulnerabilities highlights the intersection of poverty and trafficking. The seductive undertones in Lizzy's offers are not personal tactics but a showcase of the mechanisms that traffickers use to prey on the hopes of the impoverished. Through Lizzy's character, Chinwuba exposes the irony of traffickers presenting themselves as saviours while leading their victims into suffering. Faith's experience with Lizzy—a trafficker and a madam, is replete in the novel— *Trafficked* (2008), where Nneoma—a university scholar and a teacher by profession narrates how she and some girls are tricked into migrating abroad “when the [traffickers] showed them pictures of the schools where [they’ll be] teaching and [gave them] appointment letters signed by people with English names” (Adimora-Eziegbo, 2008, p. 127). Ironically, Faith Moses’ and Nneoma’s trafficking ordeals which are a result of allures and deceitful yet seductive offers that are meant to entice them [Faith and Nneoma] into sex slavery abroad corroborates Kara’s (2009) opinionation that the use of a “false offer of a job, travel or another income-generating opportunity [facilitates] the purpose of acquiring a [sex slave]” (p. 7). The situations described by Chinwuba and Adimora-Eziegbo regarding Lizzy Johnson and the anonymous Nigerian traffickers’ deceit of a false job in compelling Faith Moses, Nneoma and the other girls to migrate abroad is also comparable to Bales' (2012, p. 21) assertion regarding the two key elements of contracts—entrapment and concealment—that allow traffickers to entrap victims as indentured sex slaves.

In *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi replicates the oppressive poverty depicted in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), using Eyo's family's desperation and their "fetish cargo mindset" to critique the systemic and economic conditions driving trafficking. The family's idealised view of the United Kingdom as a land of opportunity pushes them to entrust Eyo to Uncle Femi, who ultimately betrays their trust by selling her to Sam in the UK. This decision exposes the tragic irony of Eyo's family ambition to escape poverty at the expense of their daughter's wellbeing.

In *Eyo* (2009), Femi, as characterised by Sanusi, exemplifies the archetype of the manipulative trafficker whose outward appearance conceals his true intentions. Bales (2009, p. 21) cites that traffickers use promises of a better life abroad as strategies of deception. Similarly, Femi, dressed in an "expensive-looking shirt, trousers, and leather shoes" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20), epitomises this strategy. His glamorous persona and mimicry of a "European returnee" reflect what Bales describes as the "wealth show off" mentality traffickers adopt to gain trust and mask their operations (Bales, 2009, p. 21). This facade, as Bales (2012) notes, is essential because "slavery is still illegal everywhere" (p. 48). Sanusi accentuates this duality, portraying Femi's "wealth and elegance" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20) as both a lure and a critique of societal admiration for material success. Sanusi accentuates this duality, portraying Femi's "wealth and elegance" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20) as both a lure and a critique of societal admiration for material success. This duality conceals the underlying exploitation and moral compromises tied to material wealth within a globalised context where such wealth is often idolised. By portraying Femi in this way, Sanusi underscores how society admires wealth without scrutinizing its origins.

Femi's depiction links the critique of materialism to a exploration of societal values and their impact on justice and equity.

Sanusi further highlights Femi's allure by describing the glints of his diamond wristwatch reflecting the sun's rays, which captured Wade's attention. Due to Wade's piqued state, he reiterates his stance that: "[Eyo] has to go" abroad. At least in London, she'll be able to go to school. She will have a better life than the one she has here" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20). In this except, irony underpins the narrative's critique of Wade's Reckless pursuit of ambition. Wade's fixation on Femi's diamond wristwatch, which "reflected the sun's rays" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20), symbolises Wade's obsession with wealth and his belief that Eyo's migration will bring prosperity. This obsession drives Wade to insist, "[Eyo] has to go" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20), convinced that London promises a better future. His repeated declarations, such as "There's nothing to think about" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20), reflect a tragic naivety, as he overlooks the dangers of entrusting his daughter to Femi. The repetition emphasises Wade's unquestioning trust and refusal to consider the risks, underscoring his profound lack of awareness. The irony unravels as Femi feigns reluctance, claiming he has "not sent children abroad before" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 21), only for Wade to emphatically respond, "There's always a first time" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 21). This dialogue shows Wade's desperation and failure to detect Femi's deception. The dialogue captures Wade's eagerness, with his emphatic response exposing a desperation so intense it hinders his ability to recognise deceit. This desperation, paired with Femi's feigned reluctance, showcases how vulnerability obscures judgment, paving the way for manipulation to thrive. Wade's actions, finally, transition into societal pressures that exploit trust and desperation.

Sanusi further critiques the systemic forces that allow traffickers like Femi to thrive. The allure of Femi's wealth and his mimicry of a "European returnee" underscore societal glorification of material success, which traffickers exploit to hide their predatory activities. Wade's belief that there is "no future [for Eyo] living in Nigeria" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 21) encapsulates the devastating irony of his decision—one that leads Eyo into exploitation rather than opportunity.

In Chinwuba and Sanusi's narratives, the susceptibility connected with pauperism and a "fetish cargo" attitude is mentioned as a contributing cause to sex slavery due to contract slavery, as predicted by Bales (2009), Kara (2011) and Nutsukpo (2019). Thus, Lizzy Johnson, a human trafficker, uses enticing employment offers in Italy to persuade Faith Moses to leave for greener pastures. Femi, on the other hand, attracts and arouses Wade's interest in convincing his child Eyo to relocate to the United Kingdom owing to Femi's luxurious appearance. Lizzy and Femi's juicy and gorgeous look is a "catch-worm" or "camouflaging" strategy that Bales (2012) underlines as comprising the 'entrapment and concealment' motives underlying contract slavery. On the issue of traffickers and their targets, Nutsukpo (2019) states that traffickers easily target disadvantaged people in the West African sub-region. Again, Bales (2009, p. 88) emphasises that disadvantaged and vulnerable girls with ardent desires, just as Faith and Eyo, who engage in dogsbody works as in the selling of iced-water or a ward in third-rate clinic "are trafficked, often through taking advantage of [their] aspiration for a life outside domestic drudgery." As a result, traffickers like Lizzy and Femi prey on their victims' [Faith Moses and Eyo's] vulnerable states by putting them under false contracts.

Furthermore, Ayuk-Etang's (2018) study confirms Bales' (2012, p. 21) argument that traffickers "display off" their money in their effort to traffic their victims. In Ayuk-Etang's (2018, p. 131) view, the amount of money [the traffickers] send to Nigeria and the massive structures they construct demonstrate this. This socioeconomic progress inspires many parents in forcing their children to travel overseas and earn money to improve their living situations (Ayuk-Etang, 2018, p. 131). Ayuk-Etang's (2018) assertion is vividly demonstrated in *Eyo* (2009), where Femi arouses Wade's interest in sending Eyo to London through his appearance and wealth. Ayuk-Etang's (2018, p. 130-131) cites Aghatise (2004, p. 1129) and corroborates that individuals are typically encouraged to migrate overseas by the prospect of earning substantial, easy-going gains in a short period. Ayuk-Etang's (2018, p. 130) agrees with Aghatise's (2004) fact that Africans are constantly misled, as well as giving paradisaical imagery of Europe that is contrary to the real Western world.

Similarly, Lizzy Johnson and Femi also present Faith Moses and Wade with an exaggerated imagery of Europe as a utopia world through their speeches and appearances. Ayuk-Etang (2018, p. 130) affirms Aghatise's (2004, p. 1129) view and reiterates that Africans still harbour this colonial [cargo] mentality, believing that everything in the West and Europe is wonderful, and vice versa. Parallel to Aghatise's (2004, p. 1129) view, Faith is inspired to go overseas and fulfil her aspirations since she is delighted by Lizzy's adoption of Westernised culture. Wade, on the other hand, is forced to arrange for Eyo's trafficking out of Nigeria because he wants Eyo to move overseas to make a fortune and support her family. Wade believes that London was a location where all ambitions were possible and that Eyo would experience success in the United

Kingdom comparable to Eyo's stay in Nigeria. Wade is now even more eager for Eyo to move abroad so that he [Wade] too might experience such a miracle-life makeover as a result of Femi's quick metamorphosis from a former "Jungle City orphan" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 20) to a wealthy and appealing young man.

Chinwuba and Sanusi, for instance, chronicle how pimps, madams, and trafficking agents systematically use deceit to lure and ultimately trap their victims into contract sex slavery. Weissbrodt (2002, p. 19) and Bales (2009, p. 21) argue that traffickers' primary aim is to exploit vulnerable individuals for maximum profit while minimising risks. In both novels, the true intentions of the traffickers or pimps (Lizzy and Femi) are concealed from their female victims (Faith Moses and Eyo). The traffickers' affluent lifestyles and their activities in Nigeria create the illusion that they are prosperous, hardworking "European returnees." By presenting themselves as such, these traffickers convince the residents of Ajegunle, Nigeria, that Europe holds the key to achieving the "American dream" that has eluded them in Africa. Consequently, girls like Faith Moses, Doris, and Amaka are led to believe that migrating to Europe is essential for a transformative life change, a semblance to the supposed success of these "European returnees."

Traffickers paradoxically portray Europe as a place of wealth and opportunity, using exaggerated and ironic promises. Yet, for innocent migrants, this dream often hides the reality of sexual exploitation. This exaggerated and contradictory image is clear in Chinwuba's melancholic tone. The narrator shows how the desperation of Bini residents to travel and work abroad traps girls like Faith, Doris, and Amaka in indentured sex slavery in Italy. Chinwuba recounts:

Three girls were ready for shipment. Her trip back home had not been in vain. She had encountered so many girls in Nigeria. Faith, Doris, Amaka. She did not remember how they looked. Many wanted to come out. Many wanted to escape from the misery at home and go abroad. To do what exactly? They did not know and did not care. All they sought was to travel abroad. So when you approached them, they jumped at the opportunity. Lizzy had forgotten who was who. Who was tall and who was short? Who was slim? Who was fat? Who was yellow? Who was black? What did it matter? The important thing was that they had a body to sell, from which they would pay her back all the money she had invested in the various arrangements for their journey (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 59-60).

Notice Chinwuba's use of anaphora, repetitive questioning techniques and use of rhetorical questioning in: "Who was tall and who was short? Who was slim? Who was fat? Who was yellow? Who was black? What did it matter?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 60). This style, thus the use anaphora in the repeated phrases "Who was..." reflects the loss of individuality among the girls. This repetitive questioning technique highlights the detached, systematic process of commodification, reducing the girls to mere physical characteristics. The rhetorical question, "What did it matter?", further emphasises the dehumanisation the girls face, as their identities and humanity are dismissed as irrelevant. Through the narrative style, Chinwuba explores the motif of dehumanisation and commodification, portraying Faith, Doris, and Amaka as objects stripped of their identities and prepared for shipment to Madam Lizzy in Italy.

As Bales (2012, p. 21) argues, the dual nature of fake contracts—entrapment and concealment—entraps victims who are eager to migrate for better opportunities. Chinwuba illustrates this through the girls' indifference to the specifics of their promised jobs abroad, as they "did not know and did not

care” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 59–60). This aligns with Bales’ (2009, p. 55) observation that migration often dislocates impoverished individuals, making them vulnerable to exploitation and turning them into a “bumper crop of potential slaves.”

Lizzy’s promises of high-paying jobs, such as working on “tomato farms and executive restaurants” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65), are euphemisms designed to entice and deceive. The understatement, “Minimum wage indeed! It’s rather the maximum wage that you will make, my Dears” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65), depicts the irony, where the girls are unaware that their labour will involve sex slavery and not the guaranteed work “in a hospital, a big, posh executive restaurant [or] to pick tomatoes or other fruits on a farm” (44).,” and the meagre succours the girls will earn contrastive to the assured “minimum wages” in Italy. Chinwuba’s blend of understatement and irony exposes the duplicity of traffickers, critiquing the systemic conditions that allow such exploitation to thrive. Lizzy’s success in trafficking a “batch of girls” earns her recognition as a “bona fide member of the [human sex trafficking] club—[Best Sisters International Social Club]” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 63), a satirical revelation of the normalisation of such heinous practices within trafficking networks. This narrative further highlights the exploitation of the girls’ ignorance and desperation by traffickers as Bales (2009, p. 34) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) stipulate that traffickers conceal the true nature of their agreements, ensuring that victims are unaware of the exploitative conditions awaiting them. The narrative further exemplifies Bales’ (2009, p. 78) assertion that commercial sex work often serves as a precursor to enslavement, highlighting the systemic exploitation inherent in trafficking.

Chinwuba reflects Bales (2009, p. 34; 78) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) views, drawing on her understanding of trafficking methods to reflect on the mechanisms of contract sex slavery. The victims, including Faith Moses, only discover the true nature of their work upon reaching their destinations. Chinwuba illustrates Bales (2009, p. 34; 78) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) views through Faith's shock upon arriving in Italy during winter, realising that fruit picking—her promised job—would be impossible in such conditions. Faith's question to Lizzy "who can pick fruits in this weather?" and Lizzy Johnson's ironic response. Further, Faith's hopeful suggestions of "restaurant work" or "hospital work" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 238) are dismissed as Lizzy unveils her (Faith's) true role through the answer:

The season for fruit picking has passed. You'll do another work You will need papers to do that kind of work... Faith, you shall do road work. You are lucky that there is a strike action going on now. Otherwise you would be [on the roadside], cold or no cold. Get used to the weather. First, you'll change your name. Faith Moses is not good for this work. We don't want the police to know your real name. You will simply be called, Joy, Gioia in Italo. You'll bring joy to your customers. Men like such names, Joy, Comfort (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 239-239).

Chinwuba uses this fictitious scenario to support Bales' (2009) and Weissbrodt's (2002) claims that victims of contract sex slavery are unaware of their actual labour conditions due to the traffickers' tactic of "concealment" (Bales, 2012, p. 21). In the extract, Chinwuba employs dialogue and irony to explore the theme of concealment in sex slavery. The trafficker's instructions to Faith, such as changing her name to "Joy" or "Gioia," symbolise the erasure of her identity. This act of renaming is a form of symbolism, representing how traffickers strip victims of their individuality to commodify them for sexual

exploitation. The use of irony is evident, as the name "Joy" contrasts with the suffering and despair Faith is about to endure, highlighting the cruel deception inherent in contract sex slavery. The narrative technique of direct address in the trafficker's commands creates a tone of unsettledness, depicting the inhumane treatments Faith will endure. Phrases like "cold or no cold" and "get used to the weather" reflect the trafficker's lack of empathy, underscoring the dehumanisation of victims. This dehumanisation is further reinforced through the trafficker's focus on Faith's utility to "customers," reducing her to a commodity. In context, Chinwuba critiques the systemic exploitation that thrives on the vulnerability of individuals like Faith. The narrative exposes how traffickers use concealment—changing names, falsifying identities, and concealing the reality of sex slavery—to perpetuate their operations. This concealment is intricately linked to entrapment, as victims are coerced into roles they cannot escape, as noted by Bales (2012, p. 21).

The renaming of Faith to "Gioia" reflects a strategy traffickers use to erase identities. Okolie and Chukwunwike (2021) term this tactic "ghostification," where victims are given fake identities, leading to the erasure of their legal and personal existence (p. 28). This process ensures that sex slaves remain undocumented and untraceable, as their forged travel documents render them invisible to the state. Faith's new name, "Gioia," serves to disguise her identity and keep her off immigration records, a deliberate scheme by traffickers to conceal their operations. This name changing deployed by traffickers on the female victims is replicated in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009). In *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009) and *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), the renaming of trafficked women highlights the erasure of identity as a tool of control. Chisom,

renamed Sisi and Alek, renamed Joyce, mirror Faith Moses' transformation into Gioia. This act of renaming, termed "ghostification" by Okolie and Chukwunwike (2021), ensures that trafficked women remain unidentified and untraceable, allowing traffickers to maintain control over their victims. Griffith's (2000) observation that "transplanted and dislocated human beings... deprived of their indigenous cultural contexts, their language and even their names, were reconstituted as figures occupying profoundly ambiguous expressive space" (p. 7) encapsulates the dislocation and dehumanisation these women endure.

In the context of Chinwuba's and Unigwe's novels, Okolie and Chukwunwike (2021) and Griffith's (2000) phenomena are illustrated through characters who endure the profound loss of self that accompanies their disconnection from culture and identity. The characters in Chinwuba and Unigwe's novels experience disconnection in personal and systemic ways. The characters are stripped of their original names and cultural identities, they lose the original identities (names) that link them to their pasts, leaving them in a state of emotional and psychological limbo. This dislocation isolates them, not only from their homeland and heritage but also from a sense of self-worth and agency. Language barriers further alienate them, as they are unable to claim their voices in foreign contexts, reducing their presence to subalterns. Additionally, the physical and social environments They are pushed into situations that often reinforce their dehumanisation, treating them as commodities rather than individuals with heritages, dreams and dignity. The layers of disconnection—such as the loss of identity, isolation from familiar environments and severance from support systems—create a profound sense of

invisibility and displacement. These layers of disconnection expose the exploitative systems that rely on erasing personal identities, such as names, to operate.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba uses Faith's "ghostification" to expose the psychological manipulation inherent in trafficking. Faith's curiosity about her "ghostification" and her role in "[giving] joy to customers" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 239) reflects her struggle to comprehend her situation. Transliterally, Faith's comments, "Police? Customers?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 238) presupposes her thought or question: in what way does a proposed fruit picker on an Italian farm, a ward or a worker in an Italian hospital or restaurant hide from the police or provide joy to customers? Thus, her question, "Police? Customers?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 238), underscores her disbelief and inability to reconcile her promised job as a fruit picker with the reality of her new role. Lizzy's ironic response, "Yes customers," followed by "You will stand by the road and hustle for customers" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 238), reveals the truth: Faith is expected to engage in forced prostitution. The phrase "hustle for customers" (Chinwuba, 20003, p. 238) is a euphemism for soliciting sex purchasers, exposing the traffickers' use of language to conceal exploitation. This concealment ties to entrapment, with traffickers coercing victims into roles they cannot escape, as Bales (2012, p. 21) observes.

Chinwuba further critiques the power dynamics in sex slavery through the relationship between Lizzy and Faith. Lizzy's introduction of the "froo-froo thing" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 239), a prostituting costume, signals Faith's forced submission to her new role. Faith's polite question, "Aunty, is this prostitution work that I will be doing to wear this kind of froo-froo thing?" (Chinwuba,

2003, p. 239), and Lizzy's authoritarian response, "Yes" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 239), mark Faith's reluctant acceptance of her fate. The euphemistic trope "Aunty," (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 239) used to address Lizzy, symbolises the hierarchical relationship between the trafficker and the trafficked, where the former wields absolute control. This dynamic underscore the trafficker's dominance, as Lizzy manipulates Faith's vulnerability to enforce submission. Chinwuba uses this relationship to expose the systemic exploitation that thrives on such imbalances of power.

Bales (2009, p. 31) explains that traffickers create insecurity in their victims to foster dependency, which ultimately leads to enslavement. This dependency is reinforced through inhumane tactics such as starvation, isolation, and sleep deprivation, often deployed at the destination to ensure cooperation during border crossings and immigration controls (Bales, 2009, p. 39). Chinwuba reflects this in Faith Moses' experience, where Lizzy Johnson uses starvation as a psychological threat to force Faith into signing her "prostitute contract." Lizzy's statement to Lizzy, "There's no food for you until you sign this agreement to pay me back ninety million lira... Are you willing to work and provide food in your turn?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 241), exemplifies how traffickers manipulate basic needs to secure compliance. The dialogue (between Lizzy and Faith) reflects the power dynamics at play, where Lizzy wields control over Faith's survival, reducing her autonomy and agency. The ironic phrase "Are you willing to work and provide food in your turn?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 241) frames exploitation as an opportunity for self-sufficiency, covering up the coercion behind a facade of choice. This manipulation reveals

the trafficker's skill in distorting reality, framing coercion in contract sex slavery as an essential trade for survival.

Chinwuba, through the dialogue between Lizzy and Faith critiques the systemic exploitation that thrives on vulnerability and desperation. The narrative exposes how traffickers exploit basic needs to enslave victims, creating a cycle of dependency that ensures compliance. This exchange of survival for labour reflects broader societal structures that perpetuate inequality and exploitation. Similarly, just as with indebted sex slaves like Lovett, Faith before her arrival in Italy, undergoes an oath-taking ritual at the shrine "Igirigidinta" in Nigeria. This evident in Lizzy's middleman, Idahosa's caution:

This is Igirigidinta's shrine. He is the most powerful medicine man alive in Nigeria today. ...Once Igirigidinta has tied a knot, no one alive can untie it. You are about to swear with your life and your mother's life that you will pay back the money you owe this madam that is sponsoring you to Italy. You will swear that never will you reveal details of this deal to the police or to other people, never (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 199).

In the extract, Chinwuba uses symbolism, repetition, and tone to highlight how oath-taking rituals, like the one at Igirigidinta's shrine, instil fear and enforce obedience. The shrine itself symbolises a locus of coercive power, as it is described as presided over by "the most powerful medicine man alive in Nigeria today" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 199). This elevated status enhances the ritual's aura of invincibility and inevitability, reinforcing the victims' helplessness. The repetition of phrases like "you will swear" and "never" underscores the binding nature of the ritual, emphasising the absolute control it exerts over Faith and others like her. The declarative tone of Idahosa's words—"no one alive can untie it" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 199)—carries a sense of finality, leaving no room for resistance or escape. This language converts the

psychological imprisonment that traffickers impose on their victims, effectively making them slaves in mind and body before they are physically transported. Further, by invoking threats tied to the lives of their mothers, Chinwuba captures the traffickers' use of emotional manipulation, targeting the victims' fears to ensure compliance. This manipulation reflects the traffickers' strategic exploitation of cultural beliefs and familial ties, further isolating the victims in their entrapment.

Bales (2009, p. 102) and Kara (2011, p. 91) underscore the psychological manipulation central to the theme of entrapment in sex slavery. By compelling victims to undergo initiation rituals, traffickers exploit cultural beliefs to enforce control. The use of symbolic acts—such as marking, blood-drinking, and preserving personal artefacts—manifests as tools of coercion, fostering fear that binds victims to their traffickers (Bales, 2009, p. 102 & Kara, 2011, p. 91). As Kara (2011, p. 91) notes, this fear, reinforced by threats to the victims' families, creates a psychological prison that makes escape nearly impossible. Bales (2009, p. 102) and Kara's (2011, p. 91) views on the psychological manipulation using “juju” aligns with Faith's own experience in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), where the Igirigidinta shrine ritual similarly instils a sense of helplessness. The narrative exposes how traffickers use such tactics to dehumanise their victims and ensure absolute obedience.

The theme of “juju” highlights that how women and girls are drawn into contract sex slavery resonates in Adimora-Eziegbo *Trafficked* (2008). The story follows two main characters, Efe and Nneoma, whose experiences reveal the dangers of such recruitment. Efe and ten other girls take oaths to work for the agency until they can pay off their debts. This oath symbolises their entrapment,

suggesting that what appears to be a choice is actually a form of bondage. The author uses this oath as a metaphor for the loss of freedom, showing how the girls are led into a trap by false promises. Nneoma's insights illustrate this theme. She warns that there will be severe consequences if they break their oath: "...the consequences will be severe if they [disregarded] the terms..." (Adimora-Eziegbo, 2008, p. 27–128). This statement invokes the irony that the girls think they are making a decision, but they are actually being coerced into a dangerous situation. The contrast between Efe swearing her oath in a shrine and Nneoma using a Bible illustrates the different beliefs that manipulate their choices, showing how spiritual and societal pressures converge to control them. These parallel acts reveal how traffickers exploit both cultural and religious systems to control their victims, binding them through fear and moral obligation. This duality underscores the pervasive nature of coercion in contract sex slavery.

In *Eyo* (2009), the traffickers' deceit is similarly evident. The traffickers hide their true intentions, presenting Eyo's migration as an opportunity for education. Mama Olufunmi assures Eyo that her trip is free and that she doesn't need to worry about repayment. This is a clear example of misleading information. The irony here is that what is marketed as a chance for a better life actually leads to exploitation. Mama Olufunmi's advice to endure hardship for a brighter future also reflects a tragic misunderstanding of Eyo's reality: "You must endure [so] your life will be better..." (Sanusi, 2009, p. 30). Mama Fola reinforces this idea, saying, "Endurance is everything" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 31). This advice reveals a societal ignorance about the risks of trafficking. Femi, who presents himself as a helper, is actually lying about his intentions. Weissbrodt (2002) notes that traffickers often conceal their true goals (p. 7), and

this is evident in Femi's manipulations. Eyo's journey serves as an illustration of how vulnerable women are trapped. The metaphor of entrapment is clear as her dreams turn into sexual exploitation. The tragic irony is that Eyo, who expected education and opportunity, instead becomes a sex slave in London. Eyo's situation aligns with Harriet Jacobs' statement that "slavery is terrible for men; but it is far more terrible for women" (Bales, 2009, p. 65). Eyo's body is reduced to a commodity, echoing Bezan's observation that women's bodies often become objects for male desires (2012, p. 15). Eyo's exploitation shows the actuality of her condition, where she is commodified, sold and none of the profits benefit her.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009), the female characters, Faith Moses and Eyo, can be understood as vagabonds in the context of Bauman (1998). Bauman (1998) divides humanity into two groups: tourists and vagabonds. Tourists move willingly towards something enticing, while vagabonds are forced to move because their surroundings are unbearable. As Obi-Ani et al. (2020, p. 13) note, "the tourists are those who are on the move because they want to be... Vagabonds are those who are on the move because they find their environs unbearable." The distinction between tourists and vagabonds also reflects the theme of contrast, a literary device that juxtaposes voluntary, privileged mobility (tourists) against coerced, survival-driven migration (vagabonds). Faith and Eyo's experiences embody the vulnerability and exploitation tied to "vagabondage," which is further emphasised through the characters' encounters with traffickers. This dynamic reinforces the motif of coercion and entrapment, highlighting the realities faced by displaced individuals.

Chinwuba and Sanusi, further highlight the mechanisms of "entrapment and concealment," a concept detailed by Bales (2012, p. 21) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7), which illustrates how Faith Moses and Eyo fall into the trap of sex trafficking. Chinwuba emphasises:

Most of the girls did not know what types of jobs awaited them abroad. But by then it was too late to turn back. Their travelling documents would have been taken from them and perhaps used to ferry in other girls. They were stranded. Most of them were forced to embrace street life. They had no choice, they claimed. But they did (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 177-178).

In the extract, Chinwuba uses irony, symbolism and narrative tone to showcase the mechanisms of entrapment and concealment in trafficking. The irony lies in the statement, "They had no choice, they claimed. But they did," (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 177-178) which highlights how traffickers manipulate victims into a state where they denied their agency, even when potential options exist. This irony highlights the psychological manipulation central to entrapment, as victims are conditioned to believe escape is impossible. The confiscation of travelling documents serves as a symbol of control, representing how traffickers strip victims of autonomy and tether them to contract sex slave. By possibly reusing these documents to ferry in other girls, Chinwuba exposes the cyclical and systemic nature of trafficking—each victim is both a pawn and a precedent for future exploitation. The narrative tone, which oscillates between empathetic—"Most of the girls did not know what types of jobs awaited them abroad. But by then it was too late to turn back." (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 177) and accusatory—"Most of them were forced to embrace street life. They had no choice, they claimed. But they did" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 178), reflects the tension between the victims' perceived powerlessness and the cruelties of their

situation. This dual tone highlights traffickers use concealment—false promises, withheld information and the confiscation of identities—to entrap victims. As Bales (2012, p. 21) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7) note, these mechanisms are intrinsic to the trafficking process, securing compliance through fear and dependency. Chinwuba's portrayal aligns with critiques of trafficking systems, revealing how societal complicity and structural inequality perpetuate this exploitation.

Abidemi Sanusi continues to detail the girls' descent into survival-driven decisions, further examining their entrapment as indentured sex slaves. Abidemi Sanusi, on the other hand, reiterates:

Every time Stella went to the village, everybody went to her house. They all wanted to know if she could help them go to the uukay to work. No one asked about the jobs they would do once they got there (Sanusi, 2009, p. 141).

Sanusi employs irony and foreshadowing in this excerpt to underscore the mechanisms of entrapment and concealment central to trafficking. In the excerpt, the villagers' eagerness to seek Stella's help in going to the "uukay" reflects their desperation and trust in perceived opportunities abroad. The irony lies in the lack of questions about the jobs awaiting them—a telling silence that highlights their ignorance of the harsh realities ahead, as well as the traffickers' deliberate withholding of critical information. This absence of curiosity becomes a critical tool of concealment, as traffickers exploit their victims' hope and naivety. The passage also uses foreshadowing, as the villagers' unquestioning attitude hints at the deceptions they are likely to face. Stella's role as a facilitator for migration parallels the traffickers' manipulative tactics, reinforcing the theme of entrapment. By fostering an illusion of opportunity, the

narrative reveals how traffickers ensnare their victims with promises that hide the truth. Sanusi, though using irony and symbolism exposes the psychological and economic vulnerabilities that leave individuals susceptible to trafficking. Through Stella's character, the text highlights how societal pressures, such as poverty and the allure of foreign wealth, contribute to contract sex slavery.

Abidemi Sanusi declares yet another position that clearly describes Eyo's precarious situation, stating that "she was leaving behind all she'd ever know. They said she was lucky but they lied..." (Sanusi, 2009, np. Front-cover page).

Abidemi Sanusi's statement about Eyo is laden with irony. An irony of a bright future turned sexual exploitation. In *Eyo* (2009), the irony of a bright future turning into sexual exploitation is illustrated through Eyo's journey. Initially, she believes she is moving toward a life filled with promise and opportunity, lured by the false hope of a better existence abroad. This irony lies in the transformation of her aspirations into a nightmare. What is presented as a pathway to empowerment quickly devolves into experiences of exploitation. Eyo's initial perception of her migration as a chance for a better life contrast with the reality she faces upon arrival—being thrust into the sex trade against her will. This duality highlights the deceptive nature of the promises made to her and other victims, emphasising that what is marketed as a chance for empowerment is, in fact, a pathway to exploitation.

Following the last three extracts stated by Chinwuba and Sanusi, there is the depiction of the basic characteristics of contract sex slavery as stated by Bales (2009, p. 36) and Weissbrodt (2002, p. 7). Thus, the basic features that characterise contract sex slavery include the use of a false promise of guaranteed work, the concealment of real intent, the exposure of real intent upon arrival and

the use of force in agreeing to prostitute oneself or signing a contract as a sex slave.

From the analyses, indentured sex slavery refers to a form of exploitation where individuals, particularly women and children, are lured into accepting fictitious job offers under the guise of legitimate employment. Upon arrival at their destination, they find themselves trapped in a cycle of sexual servitude, bound by deceptive contracts that strip them of their autonomy and subject them to the demands of their traffickers.

In conclusion, Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) illustrate the interconnectedness of coerced, indebted, and indentured sex slavery, showing how these forms of exploitation are intertwined. In both narratives, coerced sex slavery acts as the entry point, where traffickers use psychological manipulation and threats to force vulnerable individuals into sexual servitude. This coercion often leads to indebtedness, as victims become trapped in cycles of financial obligation due to inflated debts imposed by their captors. For instance, Faith in *Merchants of Flesh* (2009) and Eyo in *Eyo* (2009) are coerced to accept a debt that seems impossible to repay, highlighting how coercion results in debt bondage. Additionally, indentured sex slavery complicates this dynamic, with victims misled into accepting exploitative situations under the guise of legitimate employment. This deceptive promise appears in both texts, where characters are drawn into false security that leads to further exploitation. The narratives emphasise that these forms of slavery are interconnected, each reinforcing the others through a cycle of manipulation, debt accumulation, and false promises, creating a systemic issue that makes it difficult for victims to escape. By highlighting this interconnectedness,

Merchants of Flesh (2003) and *Eyo* (2009) call attention to the need for comprehensive strategies to combat the multifaceted nature of sex slavery and protect the rights and dignity of vulnerable individuals.

3.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter analyses representations of sex slavery in two Nigerian female writings, identifying three main types: forced labour, debt bondage and contract slavery. It reveals that coerced sex slavery occurs when institutions compel individuals, particularly women and children, to engage in sex against their will. Forced labour-based sex slavery relies on coercion for total submission to superiors. The chapter highlights indebted sex slavery, where victims are trapped by inflated debts due to deceptive practices, aligning with Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt's (2002) assertions of its prevalence globally, often perpetuating generational cycles of enslavement. Additionally, it explores contract sex slavery, where victims are lured by false job offers and subsequently enslaved as sex workers. The analyses of Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) illustrates the existence of both transnational and domestic sex slavery. All three forms—coerced, indebted, and indentured—strip victims of agency and voice, forcing compliance with their masters. The chapter concludes by affirming that all forms of sex slavery are inherently exploitative and dehumanising, stripping victims of their autonomy and humanity. Building on this foundation, the next chapter examines the demand side of sex trafficking and how it drives the main female characters into sexual slavery.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0. THE DEMAND SIDE OF SEX TRAFFICKING THAT LEAD THE PRINCIPAL FEMALE CHARACTERS IN SEX SLAVERY IN CHINWUBA'S *MERCHANTS OF FLESH* (2003) AND SANUSI'S *EYO* (2009)

4.1. Introduction

Chapter four consists of the analysis and discussion of the demand factors for sex trafficking present in the texts *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009). In doing so, this paper uses Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Demand Theory on Sex Trafficking* to analyse and discuss how the demand factors in the selected texts contribute to the recruitment and incorporation of female characters into sexual slavery. More so, the analysis and discussion of the second research question draw on textual quotes from the two selected texts.

4.2. R.Q. 2. How do Demand Factors of Sex Trafficking Contribute to the Recruitment and Incorporation of Female Characters into Sexual Slavery in the Selected Texts?

The second research question examines *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009) through Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Demand Side of Sex Trafficking*. It identifies how the demand side influences principal female characters into sexual slavery. The study highlights societal and state-driven motivations that perpetuate demand for sex trafficking, focusing on purchasers, exploiters, state, and cultural influences.

4.2.1. The purchasers/users/buyers

Purchasers, in Hughes' (2004) opinion, refer to the individuals [men] who demand sex acts from prostitutes [sex slaves]. The purchasers' demand for sex

acts comes in diverse ways. Concerning Hughes' (2004; 2005) demand theory, Lutyna and Lanier (2012) argue that "the need for sex, the cultural meaning associated with prostitution, and violence towards sex trafficked victims" (p. 558) are the reasons behind purchasers' demand for sex. In the novels, *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009), Chinwuba and Sanusi provide examples on how the purchasers of sex acts influence the high demand, recruitment and incorporation of black women and girls into sex slavery.

Hughes (2005, p. 7) highlights the demand for sexual acts among purchasers, particularly men, who seek such engagements for amusement and gratification. Chinwuba, in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), illustrates this demand through the character of Stella, a victim of sexual exploitation. Stella, owned by Madam Tayo Asemota, is subjected to the desires of Pietro, a wealthy merchant, as part of a deal that benefits Asemota. This profiteer reduces Stella's existence to a commodity, exploiting her to satisfy Pietro's demands. The subjugation that defines Stella's life serves as a microcosm of a larger malaise—where human dignity is sacrificed for profit and pleasure. Chinwuba reveals the transactional relationship between Pietro and Tayo Asemota, in which Stella is compelled to comply with Pietro's desires in exchange for material gain. Stella's body becomes the currency of a trade—an object for Pietro's gratification and a means for Tayo Asemota to acquire merchandise. The author, Chinwuba, recounts how the demand for female sex-trafficked victims escalated in Italy. She narrates:

Pietro, her customer in Naples sold her [Tayo] things to her on credit and asked to go out with Stella. Tayo urged the young girl to be "nice to Pietro. Stella was so nice that Pietro gave Tayo fifty per cent discount on the goods. Tayo promised him more nice nights with Stella for the rest of their stay in Italy, and got all her goods for

free. Pietro initially lodged Stella in a cheap hotel. He was happily married, he told her, but readily made her mistress. He visited her often in the hotel, telling his wife of sudden business trip. After a while he regularized her stay, rented and furnished an apartment for her, via Tiato [...]. She remained grateful to Tayo who had brought her to Italy. She assisted her in the fashion business, sending goods to her by unaccompanied freight. In subsequent trips, Tayo took the young apprentices in her hair dressing salon to Italy and set them up in Naples with Stella, who told Pietro that they were her cousins and in-laws; in short, members of her extended family. She sent them out at night [to other purchasers just like Pietro] and collected their earnings... And that was how prostitution of Bini girls in Italy was born (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 83-84).

In the extract, Chinwuba narrates how the purchasers drive the demand for sex trafficking and sex slavery. By focusing on the actions of figures like Pietro, Chinwuba exposes how the purchasers' pursuit of gratification sustains the systemic forces that enable trafficking and sexual enslavement of women. Pietro, as a representative of the purchasers, embodies the transactional nature of exploitation. Pietro's willingness to exploit Stella for his own pleasure, while maintaining a facade of respectability, underscores the duplicity of those who sustain the trafficking industry. Chinwuba's portrayal of Pietro's actions—lodging Stella in a hotel, later upgrading her living conditions and regularising her stay—reveals the calculated manipulation that ensnares victims in cycles of dependency. These actions of the purchasers align with Hughes' (2005, p. 7) assertion that the purchasers' demand for sexual acts drives the exploitation of women.

Chinwuba's narrative also highlights the broader impact of such purchasers, as Pietro's actions not only exploit Stella but also facilitate the trafficking of other women. His role in enabling Tayo's operations demonstrates how the desires of individual purchasers exacerbate, sustaining networks of exploitation.

This mirrors Lutyna and Lanier's (2012) observation that the demand for prostitution directly fuels the trafficking of women and girls.

By centring the purchasers in her critique, Chinwuba presents the complicity of purchaser in perpetuating such injustices. Chinwuba's narrative serves as both an indictment of individual actions and a broader commentary on the societal and economic frameworks that sustain trafficking. Therefore, the purchasers take on a significant role as key forces driving the commodification and exploitation of human lives, highlighting their centrality in sustaining sex slavery.

Ifemoma Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) delves into the motivations and behaviours of the purchasers that influence sex trafficking and sex slavery. In her narration she emphasises the preferences of purchasers and how it influences the demand for sex slaves. Chinwuba cites:

Many white customers wanted the back door. And were willing to pay exorbitantly for it too, sometimes as much as three hundred thou when the normal service cost but thirty thou, or at most fifty. They said their wives at home did not oblige them, so they went out for it. It was not true. The truth was that they had overused their partners' so much, it bled. Now they looked elsewhere for younger blood, firmer bodies, with more elasticity (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 109- 110).

The excerpt shows an imagery focuses on the fetishisation of young women's bodies by purchasers. The description of purchasers' preferences for "younger blood, firmer bodies, with more elasticity" underscores the dehumanising commodification of victims, reducing them to mere objects of physical gratification. This imagery highlights the grotesque desires of the purchasers and reflects the societal complicity in perpetuating sexual exploitation. The theme of fetishisation is further explored through the purchasers' willingness to

pay exorbitant amounts for acts like "back door" [anal sex], which Chinwuba portrays as a premium service. This aligns with Black's (2003) observation, as cited in Hughes (2004, p. 19), that certain buyers seek out sex acts for exploration, indulging in encounters that their spouses are unable—or unwilling—to provide. Chinwuba's narrative critiques this justification, exposing the purchasers' motivations as rooted in a desire for novelty and domination rather than unmet marital needs. The assertion that "they had overused their partners' so much, it bled" reveals the violence and disregard for consent that underpin these acts, further emphasising the exploitative nature of the desires of the purchasers.

Chinwuba's characterisation of the purchasers as predatory figures aligns with Hughes' (2004, p. 16) argument that buyers are driven by their own erotic appetites, with little regard for the consequences faced by the victims. The exorbitant sums paid for specific acts reflect not only the purchasers' fetishisation of certain practices but also their willingness to commodify human bodies to fulfil their desires. This commodification is a recurring theme in Chinwuba's text, serving as a critique of the socio-economic structures that enable and normalise such exploitation.

Through her narrative, Chinwuba also challenges the notion of buyers as a homogenous group, echoing Hughes' (2004, p. 17) claim that they possess varied tastes and preferences. The focus on acts like anal sex, which are described as fetching significantly higher prices, illustrates the diverse and often perverse desires that drive the demand for sex trafficking. This diversity, however, does not absolve the purchasers of their culpability; rather, it shows the systemic nature of the exploitation, where victims are forced to cater for

these varied demands of purchasers at personal cost.

Chinwuba uses literary devices such as imagery and characterisation to critique the systems that support sex trafficking. By describing the fetishisation of young women's bodies and the violence involved in these transactions, she highlights the role of purchasers in sustaining this exploitation. Chinwuba's narrative examines the actions of purchasers that influence sexual slavery.

Chinwuba exemplifies the assertions of Black's (2003) Hughes (2004) and Lutyna and Lanier (2012) that the demand for sex acts by certain buyers extends beyond their preferences for specific or taboo practices, such as anal sex, to include the physical and sexual abuse of their young victims. This is evident in Chinwuba's excerpt of the ordeal of Chioma, a fourteen-year-old teenage sex and the "macho" purchaser, Suzuki. Chinwuba narrates that:

Chioma lead the customer to the patch behind where the girls stood. She stretched for payment. It was pay-before-service. ... Slowly, like a lamb led to the slaughter, she took some petroleum jelly from the common jar on the ground and applied liberally. The [purchaser] dropped his helmet on the ground, undid his belt buckle and fumbled inside his side. The girl bent forward. Her fingers grabbed the ankles ... From between her legs, she watched the man. From where the girls stood, they heard the shrill and painful shriek in the deep dark of the and knew that Chioma was in trouble. Suzuki stood there, wanting to complete the act... [The girls]: "*Che ha successo?* ([sic] italics)" "What happened?" [Suzuki]: "I have paid five cento. I must finish." [The girls]: "You want to kill her?" [Suzuki]: "I must finish," I paid five cento". [The girls]: "But you have entered. Your money is gone" ... She is dead. You have killed her, can't you see that, you can't... She is too young... [...] (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 114).

Considering Chinwuba's narrative tone, it is one of bitterness and agony for the poor sex-trafficked victim—Chioma—and spitefulness towards the purchaser—Suzuki. This excerpt centres on the purchaser as the driving force behind the exploitation depicted, critiquing their role in perpetuating the

demand for sex slaves. Suzuki, the purchaser, embodies the entitlement and dehumanisation that Lutyna and Lanier (2012) describe. His insistence on "I must finish" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 114) reduces the act to a transaction, where payment is used to justify violence and disregard for the victim's humanity. This entitlement is not an isolated behaviour but a reflection of systemic norms that commodify human bodies.

The "shrill and painful shriek" from Chioma is a pivotal moment in the text, serving as a visceral reminder of the physical and emotional toll inflicted by the purchaser. This auditory imagery, enhanced by onomatopoeia, underscores the brutality of Suzuki's actions, forcing the onlookers to confront the immediate consequences of his entitlement. The shriek also symbolises Chioma's suffering, highlighting the gory-like transactional sex trade and exposing the human cost of such exploitation. Scholars like Lutyna and Lanier (2012) have noted that violence in literature often serves to reveal the underlying structures of human motives and societal norms. This moment exemplifies how the purchaser's actions are not merely individual choices but part of a broader system of exploitation.

The dialogue reveals Suzuki's perspective, where his financial contribution overrides any moral or ethical considerations. His repeated reference to the payment—"I have paid five cento. I must finish" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 114)—underscores a mindset that prioritises his satisfaction over the well-being of the victim. This aligns with Lutyna and Lanier's (2012) argument that some buyers of sex inflict harm far beyond exploitation, driven by a sense of ownership rooted in the transaction. Research on exploitation highlights how financial transactions in such contexts often serve to rationalise and perpetuate violence

(Shelly: 2003; Hughes, 2004 & Lutyna and Lanier 2012).

The plain style of the style of the narrative highlights the purchaser's role, presenting his actions directly to reveal the harsh reality of this exploitation. By refusing to soften Suzuki's entitlement or the violence inflicted, the author compels reflection on the systemic structures that enable and normalise such behaviour. The purchaser's dominance extends beyond the victim to the onlookers, as seen in the theme of voyeurism. The girls, forced to witness Chioma's suffering, are subjected to the purchaser's power, further highlighting the pervasive impact of his actions. Their resigned commentary—"She is dead. You have killed her, can't you see that?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 114)—reflects a societal acceptance of such violence, perpetuated by the demand created by purchasers like Suzuki.

By focusing on the purchaser, the text critiques the broader societal complicity in sustaining these practices. Suzuki's actions are not merely individual choices but part of a larger system that commodifies and exploits vulnerable individuals. The narrative challenges readers to confront the demand factor as the root cause of such exploitation, exposing the purchaser's role in perpetuating this cycle of abuse. The shriek, as a moment of raw humanity, stands in contrast to the purchaser's entitlement, emphasising the devastating human cost of this demand.

Likewise, in *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi also gives instances of how buyers of sex acts contribute to the demand for sex slaves or prostitutes. Sanusi, in her novel, *Eyo* (2009) highlights the cultural norms and conspicuous conscience of sex buyers towards child prostitutes and the preference of such sex buyers for child prostitutes. Lutyna and Lanier (2012, p. 558) assert that males who buy sex and

the ethical emphasis they place on sex slaves are important variables in the demand for sex slaves, particularly in light of the cultural norms and moral values attached to those who purchase child sex slaves. Concerning the demand for child sex slaves by purchasers, Hughes (2004, p. 21) stresses that some purchasers look out for disposable children in relinquishing their concupiscent libidinal acts. The purchasers do so by sodomising, torturing and corporeally abusing children [girls] who are “supplied” by distinct exploiters [pimps or madams] (Hughes, 2004, p. 21). These girls are tamed and silenced, just as subalterns by specialised “child” exploiters [pimps/madams] before they are supplied to the sex markets. Like subalterns, these girls are voiceless, without agency and are susceptible to diverse forms of physical and sexual abuse from their purchasers, who have no fear for any consequence resulting from girl-child exploitation. In Hughes’ (2004) opinion, the commercial sexual exploitation of girls is a result of these odious acts (p. 21). Sanusi narrates how Eyo falls prey to Sam, a vicious “child” pimp who exploits her through relentless sex acts and verbal and physical assaults. Sanusi affirms Hughes’ (2004, p. 21) view of how Eyo becomes a voiceless victim, a mere object of the sexual whims of paedophilic buyers in the United Kingdom. Sanusi narrates:

At the doorway, the gentleman brought out his wallet and gave Sam some notes. Sam pocketed the money and waved the man out. In the bathroom, Eyo sat on the covered toilet seat and held the flannel firmly between her legs. A tear escaped from Eyo’s right eye [...] The man had been quite rough with her, pinching her nipples. Plus, she had hit her head on the toilet handle. The man had mounted her from behind and she had given a small grasp of pain, her arms wrapped rigidly around the toilet sides. Her cry seemed to stimulate the man even further because he became rougher. At one point, she found herself with one half of her body dangling off the toilet seat (Sanusi, 2009, p. 114).

The extract highlights the role of the purchaser in the trafficking and sex enslavement of girls and women. Through clear imagery and direct detail, the narrative shows how male buyers support a system of exploitation that turns women into commodities. The phrase "the gentleman brought out his wallet" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 114) illustrates the purchaser's mindset. This action contrasts with the violence that follows, revealing the gap between how society views masculinity and the reality of sexual transactions. The term "gentleman" becomes ironic, emphasising the buyer's entitlement and lack of respect for the girl's humanity. This aligns with the views of Coy et al. (2007) and Macleod et al. (2008), who argue that male buyers often link sexual violence to their sense of masculinity.

Eyo's experience highlights the power dynamics at play. The image of her "dangling off the toilet seat" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 114) shows the control the purchaser exerts over her. Buyers often find satisfaction in dominating women, reinforcing the idea that the demand for sex acts is connected to a desire for power. Hughes (2004) notes that buyers often see sex slaves as objects, justifying their behaviour through a sense of ownership. Coy et al. (2007) and Macleod et al. (2008) suggest that buyers have a tendency to dominate women and enjoy having control. This mindset creates an environment where trafficking and sexual exploitation can grow, as the demand for sex slaves leads to the objectification of vulnerable individuals.

Sanusi's narrative reveals Eyo's personal tragedy and also examines the societal structures that allow such exploitation. By presenting Eyo as "sex merchandise," the text highlights how women's bodies become commodities, driven by demand that supports trafficking and enslavement. The portrayal of

the purchaser as a key factor in this cycle encourages readers to understand the realities of gendered violence and the issues that sustain it.

In Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (2005), Mara's experience with a sadist client reflects the brutal realities faced by Chioma and Eyo, highlighting the pervasive violence and dehumanisation in their situations. Mara's account reveals scars left by her abuser—"traces of bites and scratches all over [her] neck" and "scars and bruises at the back of her ear" (Darko, 1995, p. 2). These details illustrate the entitlement and violence exerted by her purchaser. Chioma's experience in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) emphasises a similar dynamic. As she prepares for her transaction, described as "like a lamb led to the slaughter" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 110), it signals her vulnerability and the inevitability of violence. The moment she hears the "shrill and painful shriek" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 114) from behind her reinforces a shared awareness of danger among the women. Eyo's experience further emphasises this comparison. She notes, "the man had been quite rough with her, pinching her nipples," and describes how she "had given a small gasp of pain" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 114). These details highlight the physical and emotional trauma she endures. The imagery of Eyo's body "dangling off the toilet seat" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 114) serves as a metaphor for her loss of control, paralleling Mara's experience of being treated as an object of sadistic pleasure.

The purchasers in these narratives reveal a sense of entitlement that drives demand for sex trafficking and slavery. Mara describes her client as "a man of a giant who orders her to shout" (Darko, 1995, p. 2-3), illustrating the power dynamic at play. This theme continues in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), where Suzuki insists, "I have paid five cento. I must finish," disregarding the

consequences for Chioma (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 114). Similarly, in *Eyo* (2009), Eyo's account captures the dehumanising nature of these interactions, as she describes how the man "mounted her from behind" and became increasingly rough, leading to her cries that seemed to stimulate him further (Sanusi, 2009, p. 114). Such attitudes reflect a broader societal complicity that fuels the exploitation of women, as these purchasers view them as commodities rather than individuals. The willingness of purchasers to inflict harm underscores the demand that sustains sex trafficking and slavery, highlighting the role of buyers in perpetuating these abuses.

From the analyses, a 'purchaser' is an individual who buys sexual services, reducing the seller to a commodity and perpetuating exploitation. In conclusion, the extract effectively shows how the purchaser's role in the sex trade contributes to the trafficking and enslavement of women. Through imagery and analysis, it emphasises the need to address societal attitudes that enable exploitation and to recognise the impact of buyer entitlement on the lives of vulnerable individuals.

4.2.2. The profiteers/exploiters

The profiteers refer to the individuals that benefit from the commodification of humans [in the case of this thesis, women and girls] in the sex markets and the sex industries that profit from the prostitution of women and girls (Hughes, 2005, p. 8; Luty and Lanier, 2012). Hughes (2004, p. 2) and Hughes (2005, p. 8) classify profiteers into two classes namely the primary and the secondary profiteers. Traffickers, madams, pimps and other unionized shenanigan organisations constitute the primary profiteers (Hughes, 2004, p. 2; 2005, p. 8). Enterprises and other services such as taxi services, brothels, pubs,

motels, restaurants and cafeterias etc. comprise the secondary profiteers (Hughes, 2004, p. 2; 2005, p. 8). In general, the profiteers are composed of shenanigan unions and human or sex traffickers.

In the novels, *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009), the profiteers are expressed by the “third-generation” Nigerian female writers—Ifeoma Chinwuba and Abidemi Sanusi as the loci behind the sex trafficking business. Chinwuba and Sanusi’s representations of the profiteers as focus in their fictitious sex slavery narrations are in line with Hughes (2004); Hughes (2005); Luty & Lanier (2012) and Vogel (2017) assertions that exploiters are the central theme when it comes to researches on sex trafficking and sex slavery.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba cites the deceitful measures deployed by madams, pimps and traffickers which create the demand and facilitate the introduction of Bini girls into prostitution [sex slavery] abroad. This is evident in the narrator’s voice:

Tayo confined in her Best Sisters that there was a huge demand for Black girls in Italy, and probably the in the whole of Europe. It was a demand that was paid for in foreign currency ([as] lira, dollars, francs, sterling and mark). She explained how she had stumbled upon it when she got robbed. She now had seven girls in Naples, and Turin who brought one thousand dollars each night. She invited her best sisters to invest in the venture as the market was wide and lucrative. And that was how prostitution of Bini girls was born (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 84).

The extract elaborates the role of traffickers in creating and sustaining the demand for sex slaves, showcasing their influence and moral corruption. In this except, irony is displayed in the description of the sex trade as a "lucrative market." The term "lucrative" typically suggests respectable and beneficial economic ventures. However, in this context, it is applied to the exploitation of

Black girls, revealing the moral decay inherent in the profiteers' pursuit of wealth. The irony depicts the contradiction between the economic success of traffickers and the inhumane practices they perpetuate. Moreso, juxtaposition is evident in Tayo's transformation from a victim of robbery to an active participant in the trafficking enterprise. Initially, Tayo's vulnerability is highlighted by her unfortunate experience of being "robbed." This vulnerability contrasts with her later role as a trafficker who invites her "Best sisters to invest in the venture." This shift exemplifies the cyclical and systemic nature of exploitation, where individuals, in desperate circumstances, may transition from victims to perpetrators, further embedding the cycle of sexual exploitation to their advantage. Further, Chinwuba deploys symbolism in emphasising the global and systemic dimensions of the exploitation. The reference to currencies—"lira, dollars, francs, sterling and mark" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 84)—symbolises the international nature of the trade. The mention of various currencies indicates that this trade extends beyond local boundaries, thriving across nations and driven by financial greed. Hughes' (2004, p. 2) assertion that profiteers recoup substantial gains by subjecting the bodies of individuals, particularly women and girls, to the inhumane rigours of the sex trade aligns with the extract. This connection is reflected in Tayo's statement about having "seven girls in Naples and Turin who brought one thousand dollars each night," (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 84) which highlights the economic motivations behind the traffickers' actions. Chinwuba's narrative reflects Hughes' (2004, p. 2) perspective, showing how traffickers prioritise financial gain over the humanity and dignity of their victims.

The narrative exposes the reality: the exploiters do not only continue the

cycle of abuse but also drive the demand for sex slaves, exacerbated by the desires of purchasers. Their actions reduce individuals to merchandise for profit and gratification, illustrating the dehumanising nature of 'sex' trade.

As Hughes (2004: 2) declares, the sex trade markets are created to ensure profits for the exploiters while ensuring the continuous influx of sex-trafficked women to suffice the demand for sex acts by the purchasers. The recruitment models employed by exploiters in the sex trade markets are intricate in nature comprising both cultural symbolism and modern pragmatism, revealing an illustration of calculated manipulation.

Traditional rituals, such as the oaths of allegiance administered by witch doctors, are imbued with a sinister duality. While these rituals are culturally significant, they are repurposed by traffickers to instil psychological control over their victims. As Shelley (2003) observes, traffickers in West Africa exploit spiritual beliefs to maintain dominance, blending these practices with modern systems like transportation and communication technologies. This fusion of the traditional and the contemporary not only ensures the traffickers' operational success but also highlights their adaptability in perpetuating exploitation. Central to this narrative is Madam Lizzy, whose operations blend the ritualistic and the logistical. By importing girls such as Amaka, Chioma, and Faith Moses, Madam Lizzy employs air travel as a symbol of progress and opportunity, yet this very symbol is subverted to represent entrapment and exploitation. The vows taken at the "Igirigidinta" shrine in Nigeria, steeped in cultural significance, are weaponised to bind victims through fear and superstition, illustrating how traffickers exploit cultural traditions to maintain control. Madam Lizzy's reliance on air travel further exemplifies the

intersection of modernity and exploitation. Europol's findings, as cited by Shelley (2003), reveal how traffickers in Nigeria leverage intricate transportation networks to operate on a global scale. This strategic use of logistics transforms the promise of mobility into a mechanism of entrapment, reinforcing the traffickers' role as architects of a system designed to sustain the demand for sex-trafficked girls.

Chinwuba further unveils the industrialisation of trafficking Tayo Asemota's hairdressing salons, described as "[a] façade [that made the] luring [of] adolescents to 'greener pastures' [sic] abroad as easy as ABC" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 84), serve as a masterstroke of irony. The salons, outwardly symbols of empowerment and self-sufficiency, are in reality tools of deception, luring young women into a web of exploitation. This ironic juxtaposition between appearance and reality underscores the traffickers' ability to manipulate societal aspirations, turning dreams of a better life into nightmares of subjugation. Through the depiction of an organised network of agents: "There were agents for recruiting, agents for obtaining travel documents, agents for ferrying across to Europe" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 85), Chinwuba highlights how industrialisation aid in concealing the sex trafficking and entrapping women into sex slavery abroad. The systematic division of labour is emblematic of the commodification of human lives, where each agent's role is meticulously designed to ensure the seamless functioning of the trade. The network's efficiency highlights the exploiters' calculated approach, reducing individuals to cogs in a profit-driven machine.

Hughes (2005, p. 33) aptly characterises trafficking as a business meticulously structured to maximise profits. The extract's portrayal of

deceptive fronts, cultural manipulations and logistical precision aligns with this perspective, illustrating how traffickers exploit every available resource to achieve their financial goals. The traffickers' actions are not random but are part of a calculated strategy to commodify women and girls, feeding the insatiable desires of purchasers and perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

In conclusion, the recruitment models depicted in the extract are a testament to the exploiters' ingenuity and moral depravity. Through the use of irony, symbolism, and systematic organisation, the narrative exposes the traffickers' calculated efforts to sustain their operations. By blending cultural traditions with modern systems, they not only ensure a continuous influx of victims but also reinforce the demand for sex-trafficked girls. This analysis serves as a reminder of the exploiters' role in commodifying human lives, reducing individuals to mere instruments of profit and gratification.

Scholars such as: Ekman (2005), emphasises that the sex trade business does not exist in isolation. He reiterates that the sustenance and growth of the sex trade venture is aligned to certain factors of motivation such as the incessant quest for sex acts by purchasers. However, the sex trade venture as economic means of survival for the exploiters, they key driver influencing the growth of the sex trade market is profitability (Ekman, 2005). Chinwuba explores the motivation behind the sex trafficking business through the character, Madam Stella. The author narrates that Stella:

Knowing how lucrative the prostitution trade was, Stella started importing her own humans. Moving in with Pietro, her former flat became a dormitory for the prostitutes who worked for her in shifts. She made trips back home to recruit personnel for the business. Expatriates, she called them, Nigerian expatriates in Italy. [...] She made necessary contacts in Edo and was able to have girls shipped to her by agents without

travelling to Nigeria. Inadvertently, she started the prostitution market where unwanted girls were traded, when she sold off an ugly girl at Castle Volturno Square. Stella introduced her friends and relatives to the lucrative slave trade and in some cases acted as a transit point for fee (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 86).

From the exposition, Stella's reference to the trafficked women as "Nigerian expatriates in Italy" is an irony. The term "expatriates" typically refers to individuals who voluntarily relocate for professional or personal growth, often associated with privilege and opportunity. However, in this context, it is used to describe women coerced into prostitution, masking the exploitative and dehumanising nature of their circumstances. This ironic usage highlights the traffickers' deliberate manipulation of language to sanitise their actions and legitimise an inhumane trade. The transformation of Stella's former flat into "a dormitory for the prostitutes who worked for her in shifts" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 86) symbolises the commodification of human lives. The flat, once a personal and private space, is repurposed into a site of exploitation, reflecting how traffickers prioritise profit over humanity. This shift in the use of space highlights the systemic nature of the trade, where even environments are adapted to serve the economic interests of traffickers.

Stella's ability to "make necessary contacts in Edo" and have girls "shipped to her by agents without travelling to Nigeria" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 86) illustrates the industrialisation of trafficking operations. This process, where Stella distances herself from direct involvement, represents the efficiency and scalability of the trade. It aligns with Hughes' (2004, p. 2) assertion that traffickers increase the demand for sex slaves by creating systems that draw more women and girls into exploitation. Stella's actions exemplify how traffickers expand their networks to maximise profits while minimising

personal risk.

The incident at "Castle Volturno Square," where Stella sells "an ugly girl," further emphasises the dehumanisation inherent in the trade. The square becomes a symbolic marketplace, where women are appraised and traded based on perceived value. This act of selling a girl underscores the traffickers' complete disregard for human dignity, reducing individuals to commodities. Ekman's observation, as cited in Hughes (2005, p. 33), that "trafficking is a business [those profiteers] make as much money as possible," resonates with this portrayal. Stella's role in such transactions reflects the profit-driven ethos of traffickers, where financial gain overrides ethical considerations.

Stella's progression from personally recruiting women by "making trips back home" to relying on agents to transport girls highlights the evolution of her role within the trafficking system. This juxtaposition between her initial direct involvement and later systemic management illustrates how traffickers adapt and expand their operations to sustain and grow the trade. It also reflects the broader industrialisation of trafficking, where personal exploitation becomes part of a larger, impersonal system. Through Stella's actions and the extract shows the traffickers' central role in driving the demand for sex slaves, exposing the dehumanisation and systemic exploitation inherent in the sex trade.

The recruitment mechanisms in *Eyo* (2009) are depicted through the actions of Big Madame Stella, whose approach reveals the exploiters' role in sustaining the demand for sex-trafficked women. Stella's assertion that sex offers a "wealth of opportunities" to those willing to exploit it (Sanusi, 2009, p. 147) highlights her pragmatic outlook. Her focus on "facts: sex and money" (Sanusi, 2009, p.

155) reflects a transactional perspective, where individuals are viewed as resources within a structured enterprise. This is further emphasised when she rationalises her role by stating she is “meeting a particular demand” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 153), illustrating the exploiters’ active participation in driving the demand for sex slavery.

The narrative employs irony in its portrayal of Stella’s operations. While she frames sex trafficking as “just business” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 153), the reality of her victims’ experiences contrasts with this rationalisation. This irony underscores the exploiters’ ability to normalise exploitative practices under the guise of economic necessity, reflecting the systemic structures that sustain the trade. Johnny’s actions further illuminate the mechanisms of exploitation, particularly through the use of media-pornography. This seen in his instruction to Eyo:

I told you not to lie to me,” he said. He gestured to the men, who started unbuckling their belts ... You’re going to show these men a good time and I want you to look like you’re enjoying it ... By now the two men were naked. She could see them just over Johnny’s shoulder. The studio flat was dark... like conductor directing an orchestra, Johnny led her to the beige rug and went behind one of the cameras. The two came to join her. One stood behind her and the other stood in front of her. “Smile,” Johnny said bending over and looking into the camera (Sanusi, 2009, p. 234- 235).

In the scene, Johnny orchestrates the filming of Eyo, using the footage as a tool for blackmail. The metaphor of Johnny as a “conductor directing an orchestra” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 234) underscores his control and calculated manipulation, turning personal violation into a performance for profit. This calculated exploitation mirrors Big Madame Stella’s philosophy that sex is “just business,” as she stated, “she was meeting a particular demand” (Sanusi, 2009,

p. 153). By framing trafficking and exploitation as a supply-and-demand operation, traffickers like Johnny and Big Madame attempt to rationalise their actions as logical transactions, erasing the humanity of those they exploit.

The camera serves as a symbol of surveillance and coercion, reflecting the traffickers' reliance on technology to maintain dominance and ensure compliance. Johnny's command, "Smile," as he bent over to look into the camera (Sanusi, 2009, p. 235), highlights the traffickers' use of media not only to document but also to control their victims. This resonates with Hughes's (2005, p. 11) observation that traffickers leverage technological advancements to enhance operations, exert control, and maximise financial returns. Similarly, Big Madame Stella insisted on a pragmatic view of exploitation, declaring, "Big Madame Stella had no patience for people who refused to see the wealth of opportunities sex offered to those willing to use it" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 147). Such detachment emphasises the traffickers' use of technology and economic justifications to sustain their operations.

Shelley's model of trafficking, which highlights the integration of traditional and modern mechanisms, is partially applicable here. While the narrative excludes traditional rituals like juju, the reliance on modern tools such as media-pornography aligns with Shelley's assertion that traffickers adapt contemporary systems to sustain their operations (Shelley, 2003, p. 127). The camera's presence and Johnny's orchestration symbolise systemic efficiency in meeting the demand for sex-trafficked women. This reflects Big Madame's view, as she "didn't like emotions. She dealt in facts: sex and money" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 155). Her statement encapsulates the traffickers' utilitarian perspective, where emotional detachment and focus on profit drive their actions.

The interplay of control and exploitation is further emphasised through the ironic critique in the text. Big Madame Stella's assertion that "it was just business" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 153) critiques the rationalisation of trafficking, exposing the moral void underlying such exploitation. Likewise, Johnny's orchestration of Eyo's abuse, described as an artful direction, contrasts with the calculated cruelty of the act. The text's imagery, such as "Johnny [leading] Eyo to the beige rug" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 235) and positioning her accentuates the power dynamics that forcefully strip her autonomy. The traffickers' manipulation of compliance—through psychological coercion and technological tools—illustrates the pervasive dynamics of power that underpin trafficking networks. The traffickers' detachment from human suffering, coupled with the use of technology, reinforces the theme of exploitation as a structured and impersonal business. This rationalisation, as epitomised by Big Madame's philosophy, turns personal violations into profit-generating opportunities, critiquing not only the traffickers but also the societal structures that sustain and demand such practices.

The mechanisms of recruitment and subjugation in *Eyo* (2009) underscore the exploiters' central role in driving the demand for sex-trafficked women. Through the narrative, Sanusi explores the systemic structures that sustain trafficking, revealing the exploiters' strategies to meeting consumer desires. By responding to the demands of the sex trade, traffickers like Big Madame Stella and Johnny reinforce the cycles of exploitation, positioning themselves as central figures in the perpetuation of the sex trade markets. This analysis highlights the exploiters' influence as the demand factor behind the trafficking of women, emphasising the role they play in maintaining the global sex trade.

Therefore, the claims by Hughes (2004; 2005) that exploiters constitute a major locus to the demand factors for sex trafficking is validated by Sanusi in her novel—*Eyo* (2009).

The themes of control and exploitation in *Eyo* (2009) and *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) are reflected in Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009), where trafficking mechanisms are exposed through the stories of Sisi, Ama, Joyce (alias Alek), and Efe. Unigwe's text highlights how traffickers manipulate their victims, employing financial, psychological and physical control to maintain dominance.

In *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009), the confiscation of passports is a key tool of control. Madam and the middleman, Dele, seize the girls' documents, severing their links to freedom and autonomy. Madam's assertion, "Now you belong to me," highlights the traffickers' claim of ownership. The withholding of passports traps the girls in a state of fear and dependence. Similarly, in *Eyo*, Sanusi shows how financial debt is used to control victims. Madam warns, "Until you have paid up every single kobo...you shall not have your passport back." This mirrors the tactics in Unigwe's text, as the traffickers exploit vulnerability to enforce submission. The imposition of debt and threats of violence create a cycle of servitude, reinforcing the traffickers' authority. In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), control is established through the manipulation of dependency and fear, evident in the threat meted to the Faith, Amaka and Chioma: "You are about to swear with your life and your mother's life that you will pay back the money you owe this madam that is sponsoring you to Italy" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 199). The narrative reveals how traffickers exploit victims' desperation, creating circumstances where obedience becomes essential for

survival. This aligns with Unigwe's depiction of the girls' experiences, where their helplessness is systematically exploited. In *Eyo* (2009), Johnny's order to Eyo: "You're going to show these men a good time and I want you to look like you're enjoying it ... 'Smile,' " (Sanusi, 2009, p. 234- 5) parallels the reduction of the female protagonist into a commodity as in Unigwe's work. This dehumanisation is a recurring theme, illustrating the systemic exploitation within the sex trade.

While these themes converge, there are differences in approach. Unigwe's *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009) places emphasis on the psychological impact of trafficking, exploring the thoughts and emotions of the girls in depth. The narrative humanises them, showing their inner struggles and attempts to assert agency. Conversely, *Eyo* (2009) and *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) both focus more on the traffickers' mechanisms and the broader structures of the sex trade. However, Sanusi focuses on the girl child, whereas Chinwuba focuses on adult female victims. This contrast highlights different perspectives on the issue, with Unigwe's text providing an intimate portrayal of both young and old victims' experiences.

In summary, the themes of control and exploitation in *Eyo* (2009) and *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) are echoed in *On Black Sisters' Street* (2009). The confiscation of passports, imposition of financial debt and psychological manipulation are consistent tools employed by traffickers to dominate their victims. However, Unigwe's narrative provides a unique exploration of the development of all three protagonists from the onset of the narration, unlike characters such as Lovett in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), whose story mostly unfolds in Italy, and Nkem in *Eyo* (2009), whose narrative takes place in the

United Kingdom.

From the analyses, exploiters, traffickers, or profiteers are individuals or entities who manipulate and control vulnerable people, especially females, often through sex trafficking and sex slavery, using methods such as debt imposition, document confiscation and psychological coercion for personal or financial gain. The traffickers act as key demand factors, driving the trafficking of women into sex slavery. By framing the actions of the traffickers as business transactions, they rationalise exploitation while perpetuating systems that sustain and expand the trade. The demand for trafficked women is fuelled not only by societal complicity but also by the traffickers' calculated methods, which serve to influence the demand cycles of sex trafficking and slavery.

4.2.3. The state

Hughes (2005, p. 8) opines that, passively, the state does contribute to the Hughes (2005) opines that, passively, the state contributes to the demand for sex-trafficked females (p.8). Reiterating her stance, Hughes (2005, p. 8) posits that receiving countries are hubs for sex trafficking. Their legal frameworks, immigration policies, and law enforcement practices impact traffickers' ease of operation (Hughes, 2005, p. 8). In Hughes' (2005) opinion, "the extent to which [states] decide to treat prostitution as a regular job also determines how much they are facilitating the demand for victims" (p. 59).

Chinwuba and Sanusi both highlight how the failure of state institutions exacerbates corruption and creates and suffices the demand for sex-trafficked girls into sexual slavery. As illustrations, Chinwuba and Sanusi affirm Hughes' (2005, p. 59) claim as they discuss the complicity of the state machinery i.e., the commissioner of police, the immigration officials, the politicians and the

doctors and how they treat and promote prostitution work facilitate the demand for sex trafficked girls transnationally or domestically.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), the dialogue between Luca and Silvio exposes the state's complicitness in perpetuating sex slavery, not merely through inaction but through selective enforcement of the law. The narrator presents a portrayal of institutional hypocrisy, where the façade of legality serves as a cover for morally questionable practices. Chinwuba recounts Luca's orders to Silvio:

[Luca] Remember, they are being deported for being here illegally, not for prostitution. Prostitution is not a crime in Italy. So, those who have valid papers, we let go. [Luca] "Yes Pepe." [Pepe] "What of the men? Are we after illegal ladies alone?" [Luca] This time, yes, we are only after the girls. What could be more interesting than that, eh? Forget the men tonight (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157).

Through the use of irony, Luca's statement, "Remember, they are being deported for being here illegally, not for prostitution" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157), highlights the state's superficial attempts to mask their discriminatory actions. The dissonance between their claim and their actions—targeting women while ignoring the men—underscores a structural bias that reinforces the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. Pepe's questioning heightens this exposure. When he asks, "What of the men? Are we after illegal ladies alone?" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157), the reply, "This time, yes, we are only after the girls. What could be more interesting than that, eh? Forget the men tonight" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157) evokes a tone of casual dismissal. The flippancy in Luca's remark reflects a disturbing level of normalisation of gendered exploitation. The use of irony draws attention to the absurdity of a system that singles out women for deportation, subtly aligning state policy with the interests of exploiters. This

conversational exchange transforms the dialogue into an indictment of state complicity.

Chinwuba's narrative, in this instance, aligns with Hughes' (2005) assertion that "the extent to which [states] decide to treat prostitution as a regular job also determines how much they are facilitating the demand for victims" (p. 59). By framing forced prostitution as non-criminal while simultaneously deporting women under the guise of immigration violations, the state effectively facilitates the conditions in which human trafficking flourishes. The deliberate focus on "illegal ladies" reinforces a patriarchal structure that absolves male participants and consumers of any accountability. Such selective targeting demonstrates, in my view, a conscious prioritisation of political and social expediency over ethical governance.

Chinwuba's narrative tone combines critique with an indifference to reveal the insidious role of state policies in enabling sex slavery. This systemic complicity is laid bare not through overt denunciations but through the casual words and actions of those enforcing the law. The subtle irony and gendered commentary embedded in the narrative serve as a powerful mechanism for exposing the dual layers of exploitation: by the traffickers and by the state itself.

In conclusion, Chinwuba's depiction of the state's duplicity is not a condemnation of individual actors like Luca and Pepe but a critique of how institutional systems commodify and discard human lives. By unravelling the mechanisms of selective enforcement and moral indifference, Chinwuba confronts the reality that state-sanctioned practices often perpetuate the very injustices they claim to combat. Through this lens, *Merchants of Flesh* offers a profound commentary on the human cost of structural complicity in

exploitation.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), the narrator also states that a division of the Italian police, the “Carabineers,” are pals with traffickers and harlots in Italy. The narrator adopts a tone of critique, blending direct accusations with irony to highlight the paradox of a law enforcement body entangled with the crimes it purports to combat. The “Carabineers,” instead of being paragons of justice, are described as allies of traffickers and sex workers, an irony that exposes the dysfunction within the Italian state. The narrative tone becomes scornful as it underscores how the protectors have become perpetrators. Again, the narrator reiterates that these “Carabineers” are also suspects when it comes to the leaking of the states’ intent of raiding prostitutes off the Italian streets. The corrupt nature of the “Carabineers” is evident in their assistant boss’ statements of suspicions before one of their “road raids” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 156), “... [Our] boss has a [caution] for you. He does not want any leaks. I am aware that some of you have friends and customers among these women. If we go there and do not see those ladies on the streets, you may kiss your jobs goodbye” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 158). Chinwuba’s repetition of “Carabineers” in the statement, “Carabineers” are both “pals with traffickers and harlots” and suspects in leaking sensitive state plans is a duality that mocks the foundation of the role of the police as law enforcers. The assistant boss’s admonition adds a layer of ironic tension. When he says, “He does not want any leaks. I am aware that some of you have friends and customers among these women” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 156), the irony practically is evident in the words. Here, the assistant boss—supposedly a figure of authority—implicitly acknowledges that his officers are mingling with the people they are expected to police. It feels almost

like a tragic comedy, where everyone knows the system is rotten, yet no one can address it directly.

This critique aligns with Hughes' (2005) opinion that "the extent to which [states] decide to treat prostitution as a regular job also determines how much they are facilitating the demand for victims" (p. 59). By framing prostitution as a non-criminal act yet enabling trafficking through corruption and selective enforcement, the state aids in sustaining exploitative systems. The deliberate focus on the "Carabineers'" misconduct exemplifies Hughes' argument, as their actions—or lack thereof—directly foster conditions conducive to trafficking. This structural failure heightens the demand for trafficking victims and perpetuates a cycle of abuse.

In conclusion, Chinwuba's depiction of the state's complicity underscores the destructive consequences of institutional corruption. By employing irony and repetition, the narrative critiques the mechanisms through which state actors facilitate exploitation, aligning with Hughes' (2005, p. 59) assertion about the role of states in enabling demand. *Merchants of Flesh* thus serves as an indictment of systemic failure, confronting the reality of complicity at both individual and institutional levels. From this perspective, the text unravels how state policies and enforcement practices perpetuate the injustices they claim to challenge.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba critiques the Italian state's contradictory stance on prostitution, aligning with Hughes' (2005) assertion that "[the state] often send mixed messages about prostitution, as in Italy where the government wants to ban street prostitution because it contributes [to an immoral] society,' but at the same time, proposals [are] made to re-open

brothels” (p. 40). Through the use of irony and juxtaposition, Chinwuba exposes the state’s moral duplicity and its role in perpetuating systemic exploitation.

The narrator highlights the prominence accorded to Black prostitutes by Italian authorities, including police commissioners, politicians, medical professionals, and immigration officials. This prominence, however, is steeped in exploitation, as these women are portrayed as indispensable to the Italian community, not for their humanity but for their utility. The narrative tone becomes scathing as it recounts the aftermath of removing prostitutes from the streets: “Four [rape cases] by family members. Even a teenage immigrant student was gang-raped by a group of boys” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 204). The enumeration of these incidents employs a detached, clinical tone, which intensifies the horror of the events. This stylistic choice underscores the dehumanisation inherent in the state’s policies, where the focus shifts from addressing systemic issues to managing their consequences. Chinwuba’s use of repetition in detailing the escalating rape cases serves to amplify the gravity of the situation. This is evident in her narration:

Before two weeks more rape cases were reported all over Italy including that of a woman of eighty in Reggio Emilia. In Siena, a three-month-old baby was also sexually abused by a neighbour, while two reverend nuns were fondled and groped in commercial public boats in Vernice (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 206).

The repetition mirrors the unrelenting nature of the violence, creating a rhythm that shows the pervasive impact of the state’s actions. This narrative device aligns with Hughes’ (2005, p. 40) claim, as it illustrates how the state’s mixed messages about prostitution exacerbate societal harm rather than mitigate it. The irony in the excerpt is realised when a medical specialist advocates for the retention of prostitutes, stating, “medically speaking, medically, I repeat,

these girls play an important role in our health system” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205). The repetition of “medically” underscores the absurdity of reducing human lives to mere instruments of public health. This statement, while framed as a pragmatic solution, reveals the state’s tacit endorsement of exploitation. The medical establishment’s rationale—that the presence of Black prostitutes protects Italian women from rape—further entrenches systemic racism and sexism. This perspective aligns with Hughes’ (2005, p. 40) observation that state policies often facilitate the demand for trafficking victims under the guise of regulation.

Chinwuba’s narrative also employs juxtaposition to critique the state’s moral failings. The contrast between the state’s purported goal of curbing immorality and its reliance on exploitation to achieve this goal exposes state hypocrisy. The advice from the medical institution to immigration officials and the police commissioner—framed as a necessity to curb rape—cajoles more Black women into prostitution, perpetuating a cycle of sexual abuse. This aligns with Hughes’ (2005, p. 40) assertion that state policies often sustain the very systems they claim to dismantle.

In conclusion, Chinwuba’s *Merchants of Flesh* offers an indictment of the Italian state’s complicity in systemic exploitation. Through irony, repetition and juxtaposition, the narrative critiques the mechanisms by which state actors commodify human lives under the guise of public welfare. This portrayal not only reinforces Hughes’ (2005, p. 40) claim but also expose the reality of institutional hypocrisy and its devastating human cost. Chinwuba’s work stands as a powerful commentary on the intersection of race, gender and state complicity in perpetuating exploitation.

To buttress the weakened nature of the Italian state machinery, Chinwuba makes a satire of a high government official negotiating with a middleman who could have served as a whistle-blower on the hideouts or operations of the illegal Black female prostitutes in Italy. Yet, the high government official deploys the middleman's service to help bring the illegal Black female prostitutes back on the streets of Italy. This is heard in the dialogue between the deputy Italian police commissioner pleading with a Senegalese man—a middleman to the Best Sisters International Social Club to call the Black prostitutes back to the streets. Chinwuba narrates:

[Senegalese man]: One week in the first instance, sir. After that [the girls] will review [their decisions], whether to resume work or extend [the strike].

[Deputy police commissioner]: Meanwhile, we have a crisis on our hands. Rapes here and there. The politicians are calling. The hospitals are calling. They want the girls back on the street. *Va bene* ([sic] italics). One week is not too long. Let's wait and see (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205).

From the excerpt, Chinwuba critiques the Italian state's complicity in sex slavery through the interplay of irony, juxtaposition, and dialogue, exposing the moral contradictions embedded in its policies. The exchange between the Senegalese man and the Deputy Police Commissioner reveals the state's reliance on sex workers to maintain societal order, even as it outwardly condemns forced prostitution. This aligns with Hughes' (2005) assertion that "[the state] often send mixed messages about prostitution, as in Italy where the government wants to ban street prostitution because it contributes [to an immoral] society,' but at the same time, proposals [are] made to re-open brothels" (p. 40).

The Deputy Police Commissioner's statement, "Meanwhile, we have a crisis on our hands. Rapes here and there. The politicians are calling. The

hospitals are calling. They want the girls back on the street” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205), underscores the irony of the state’s dependence on sex workers to curb societal violence. The irony lies in the fact that the state, which ostensibly seeks to uphold morality by banning street prostitution, simultaneously acknowledges the indispensable role of these women in preventing chaos. The Commissioner’s resigned tone, particularly in the phrase “Va bene. One week is not too long. Let’s wait and see” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205), reflects a tacit acceptance of exploitation as a necessary evil. This ironic detachment highlights the state’s moral failure, as it prioritises expediency over ethical governance.

The juxtaposition between the Senegalese man’s pragmatic remark, “[the girls] will review [their decisions], whether to resume work or extend [the strike]” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205). and the Commissioner’s crisis-driven response further emphasises the state’s hypocrisy. While the Senegalese man frames the strike as a matter of agency for the sex workers, the Commissioner’s focus on societal repercussions—“Rapes here and there. The politicians are calling. The hospitals are calling” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205)—reduces these women to mere instruments of public order. This contrast exposes the dehumanisation inherent in the state’s approach, where the well-being of sex workers is secondary to their utility.

Chinwuba’s narrative aligns with Hughes’ (2005, p. 40) claim by illustrating how the state’s contradictory policies perpetuate exploitation. The Commissioner’s acknowledgment of societal dependence on sex workers aligns with Hughes’ (2005) observation that state actions often sustain the demand for trafficking victims. The dialogue’s structure, alternating between the Senegalese man’s measured tone and the Commissioner’s urgency, reinforces

the tension between individual agency and systemic exploitation. The narrative tone combines critique with a subtle despair, reflecting the entrenched nature of the state's complicity. The Commissioner's casual acceptance of the situation—"Let's wait and see" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 205)—serves as a reminder of the institutional inertia that allows exploitation to persist. This portrayal highlights the reality that state policies, far from addressing the root causes of exploitation, often exacerbate them.

In all, Chinwuba's depiction of the state's duplicity is an indictment of institutional complicity in sex slavery. By employing irony, juxtaposition, and dialogue, the narrative lays bare the mechanisms through which the state perpetuates exploitation under the guise of maintaining order. This critique not only reinforces Hughes' (2005, p. 40) claim but also challenges readers to question the ethical implications of state policies that commodify human lives. From this standpoint, *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) emerges as a profound commentary on the intersection of morality, power and systemic injustice.

Sanusi, likewise, underscores the systemic failures that perpetuate exploitation, supported by scholarly perspectives such as Hughes' (2005) assertion that "the extent to which [states] decide to treat prostitution as a regular job also determines how much they are facilitating the demand for victims" (p. 59). This is depicted in the extract:

She had a thousand decisions to make, but only one was of paramount importance: what to do about Eyo. The girl had made her look bad by running away and flinging herself in front of a moving car. Like a mad woman. Big Madame was furious and made a call. "There was an incident fifteen minutes ago. It might've been captured on CCTV," she said. She also named the road. [The U.K. Chief Constable]: "Don't to worry too much about it. Those cameras aren't working and haven't done so for a few months" (Sanusi, 2009. p. 152).

In the extract, Sanusi exposes institutional indifference through irony. The Chief Constable's remark, "Don't worry too much about it. Those cameras aren't working and haven't done so for a few months" (Sanusi, 2009. p. 152), demonstrates the state's failure to protect its most vulnerable. The irony resides in the symbolic role of surveillance systems, which are ostensibly designed to ensure safety and justice. Their dysfunction, however, reflects a wilful negligence that enables exploitation and absolves the state of responsibility.

The author further employs juxtaposition to highlight the moral corruption embedded in societal structures. The statement, "The girl had made her look bad by running away and flinging herself in front of a moving car. Like a mad woman" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 152) juxtaposes Big Madame's fury to her abuse of Eyo. Big Madame's fury is directed at the inconvenience caused to her operations due to Eyo's run-attempt and not the injustices done to Eyo. This contrast between Eyo's life-threatening despair and Big Madame's selfish preoccupations highlights the dehumanisation of victims. The narrative critiques how systemic failings provide a shield for individuals who exploit others with impunity. Symbolism appears in the description of the non-functional CCTV cameras. These cameras signify the broader collapse of institutional mechanisms and the state's abdication of its protective role. This aligns with Hughes' (2005, 2005, p. 59) critique, as it illustrates how state policies—or their absence—facilitate the demand for victims in exploitative systems.

The text portrays complicity not as passive oversight but as an active contribution to a structure that values profit and power over human dignity. The analyses support the text's implication that the state, through its inaction and

negligence, functions as a direct enabler of such exploitative practices. Again, Sanusi narrative calls for accountability, urging society to confront and dismantle the systems that sustain this oppression. The narrative interrogates the state's role in perpetuating exploitation and to demand systemic reform.

Further, Sanusi expose the state's complicity in sex slavery, illustrating how contradictory policies perpetuate exploitation. The narrative further implicates not only the state but also complicit individuals who profit from systemic failures, as evidenced by the actions of Big Madame Stella and her network, including the doctor through the extract:

Big Madame Stella heaved a sigh of relief, then dialed another, summoning a doctor, one of their regulars, to the house a hospital was out of the question. There would've been too many questions to answer (Sanusi, 2009, p. 152).

Sanusi's narrative critique the state's complicity in sex slavery, illustrating how contradictory policies perpetuate exploitation. The narrative further implicates not only the state but also complicit individuals who profit from systemic failures, as evidenced by the actions of Big Madame Stella and her network, including the doctor.

Through irony, Sanusi critiques the calculated duplicity of both Big Madame and the doctor. Big Madame's decision to summon a private doctor instead of taking Eyo to a hospital reveals her concern for secrecy rather than justice or care. The irony is that institutions such as hospitals, which should provide safety and accountability, are shunned because they risk exposing the exploitation. The doctor's complicity in this act further reflects Hughes' (2005, p. 40) point that the state, through contradictory policies and lax enforcement, create an environment where such exploiters operate with ease. The doctor, as

a regular client of Eyo's, epitomises the intersection of personal corruption and systemic failings, acting as both an abuser and an enabler of the cycle of exploitation.

The symbolism of the "House" intensifies this critique, representing spaces of exploitation that exist beyond the reach of institutional scrutiny. The house, where Eyo is both exploited and silenced, stands as a microcosm of the hidden networks that thrive because of systemic failures. Big Madame's reliance on a trusted, complicit doctor instead of seeking official healthcare exemplifies how easily exploiters bypass mechanisms meant to offer protection. Hughes' (2005, p. 8) argument that weak law enforcement and inadequate oversight empower traffickers and their networks is vividly illustrated here, as the absence of intervention allows this cycle of abuse to persist.

Sanusi uses characterisation to reveal the systemic contradictions underpinning exploitation. Big Madame Stella's sigh of relief when the situation is resolved, paired with her calculated evasion of public institutions, underscores her confidence in the system's failures. Equally, the doctor's dual role as both a medical professional and a client of Eyo highlights his betrayal of the ethical responsibilities tied to his profession. This characterisation reinforces Hughes' (2005, p. 40) critique that contradictions in state policies and enforcement embolden such individuals. The ease with which Big Madame and the doctor navigate systemic loopholes reflects the state's failure to enforce laws effectively or hold perpetrators accountable.

The narrative voice critiques the state as an enabler of exploitation through its systemic contradictions and failures. By juxtaposing Big Madame's strategic evasion of public accountability with the doctor's personal complicity, Sanusi

demonstrates how such individuals exploit systemic weaknesses to perpetuate abuse. This aligns with Hughes' (2005, p. 40) insights, which stress that these failures are not incidental but are intrinsic to the structural persistence of trafficking.

Further, Sanusi's narrative aligns with Hughes' scholarly critique to deliver an indictment of state complicity and individual corruption. The complicity of the doctor, as both a client and a trusted enabler, symbolises the intersection of personal exploitation and systemic failings. This reinforces the urgent need for accountability and reform in state policies and enforcement mechanisms. Sanusi's text serves as a rallying cry for systemic change, urging the dismantling of exploitative networks and the restoration of dignity and justice to the victims of sex slavery.

The issue of state complicity in sex slavery is a pervasive theme in contemporary literature, resonates in Ajaegbo's *Sarah House* (2013). The character Madam embodies the intersection of power and exploitation, revealing how systemic failures and moral indifference enable the trafficking of vulnerable individuals. Ajaegbo's portrayal of state complicity is encapsulated in the lines: "Madam had a lot of influential and highly placed friends, businessmen and politicians" and "Madam also had a lot of militia friends who made sure that anyone who ran away from Sarah House never lived long enough to tell the story" (Ajaegbo, 2013, p. 116). These statements expose a disturbing network of power that facilitates the trafficking of women, underscoring the complicity of both legal and illegal entities.

Ajaegbo employs irony in the phrase "influential and highly placed friends" (Ajaegbo, 2013, p. 116), highlighting the contradiction between societal leaders'

roles and their involvement in trafficking. This irony emphasises the expectation that such figures should protect citizens, yet instead, they facilitate exploitation. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of Madam's connections to businessmen and politicians alongside her ties to militia members reinforces the complexity of state complicity. It illustrates how formal authority and violent enforcement coexist to maintain the trafficking system. The hyperbolic assertion that anyone who runs away “never lived long enough to tell the story” (Ajaegbo, 2013, p. 116) dramatizes the consequences of defiance, emphasising the pervasive fear and control exerted over victims. This collective use of literary devices reveals a systemic failure where state actors become active participants in the exploitation of women, contributing to a culture of silence and complicity.

Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) presents a similar critique of state complicity, particularly through the dialogue between Luca and Silvio. Luca's assertion, “Remember, they are being deported for being here illegally, not for prostitution” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157) underscores the state's superficial legal framework that criminalises trafficking victims while ignoring the exploitative context of prostitution. The irony in this statement highlights a systemic bias that facilitates exploitation, as it focuses on ‘illegal ladies’ while disregarding male traffickers. The interactions of law enforcement in Chinwuba's narrative reveal institutional hypocrisy, as Luca's nonchalant comment, “What could be more interesting than that, eh?” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157) trivialises the suffering of women. This casual dismissal reinforces the indifference of those tasked with enforcing the law, reflecting the apathy seen in Ajaegbo's depiction of Madam's powerful connections. Similarly, Sanusi's *Eyo* illustrates state

complicity through the character of the Chief Constable, who dismisses concerns about non-functioning CCTV cameras. His statement, “Don’t worry too much about it. Those cameras aren’t working and haven’t done so for a few months” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 152), reveals the state’s negligence in protecting vulnerable populations. The irony lies in the expectation that surveillance systems should ensure safety, yet their dysfunction reflects a willful ignorance. Sanusi's use of juxtaposition emphasises the dehumanisation of victims, as the Chief Constable’s indifference contrasts with the life-threatening situation of Eyo. This critique of systemic failures resonates with Chinwuba's portrayal of law enforcement's selective enforcement of laws, where the focus is on maintaining order rather than addressing the exploitation of women.

The convergences between these texts lie in their shared critique of state complicity and the recurring motifs of irony, institutional hypocrisy, and the dehumanisation of victims. All three authors highlight the role of law enforcement as not merely passive observers but as active enablers of a system that prioritises profit over human dignity. In Ajaegbo's narrative, Madam's connections reveal how influential figures facilitate exploitation, while Chinwuba's portrayal of Luca and Silvio showcases the institutional failures that protect traffickers. Sanusi similarly emphasises the indifference of state actors, such as the Chief Constable, the other police officials and the doctor, portraying a system that enables exploitation through negligence.

However, there are also divergences in their approaches. Ajaegbo's narrative emphasises the violent enforcement of trafficking through the militia, illustrating a direct threat to victims who attempt to escape. In contrast, Chinwuba focuses on the bureaucratic indifference within law enforcement,

highlighting how selective enforcement creates an environment conducive to exploitation. Sanusi's narrative, while also critiquing systemic failures, presents a more intimate portrayal of the personal corruptions that enable exploitation, particularly through the character of Big Madame and her interactions with the doctor. This focus on individual moral decay adds a layer of complexity to the critique of state complicity.

Ajaegbo, Chinwuba and Sanusi collectively expose the multifaceted nature of state complicity in sex slavery through their narratives. By employing literary devices such as irony and juxtaposition, they illustrate how systemic failures enable exploitation while perpetuating a culture of silence and indifference. The interplay of power, morality, and exploitation in these works compels readers to recognise and address the profound human costs of state-sanctioned complicity in sex slavery. Through their critiques, these authors challenge societal complicity and call for urgent reform, reminding us that the fight against human trafficking requires a collective commitment to justice and accountability.

In conclusion, the issue of state complicity in sex trafficking is critically examined in the works of Chinwuba and Sanusi, who highlight how systemic failures within state institutions exacerbate the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. Their narratives converge on the idea that state actors—such as police, politicians, and medical professionals—play a significant role in perpetuating these injustices. However, they diverge in their focus and the particular aspects of state complicity they emphasise.

Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) presents a portrayal of the Italian state's indifference and hypocrisy regarding prostitution and trafficking. The

dialogue between Luca and Pepe illustrates the superficiality of state actions. Luca's statement, "Remember, they are being deported for being here illegally, not for prostitution," underscores the selective enforcement of laws that targets women while absolving male perpetrators (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 157). This selective focus reveals a systematic bias that not only facilitates the demand for trafficked girls but also normalises their exploitation. Chinwuba's narrative further emphasises the disastrous consequences of state policies, as seen in the rise of rape cases following the removal of sex workers from the streets. The aftermath of these removals illustrates how the state's decisions directly contribute to the vulnerability of women, reinforcing the idea that institutional policies often exacerbate the very issues they claim to address. In contrast, Sanusi's narrative delves into the personal dynamics within the trafficking network, particularly through the character of Big Madame. Sanusi depicts Big Madame's calculated decisions and her interactions with the state, exemplified by her reliance on a private doctor rather than seeking care in a hospital. This choice reflects a systemic failure, where the state's institutions are portrayed as untrustworthy and ineffective in protecting individuals like Eyo, the trafficking victim. The Chief Constable's casual remark about non-functioning "CCTV" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 152) cameras highlights a broader indifference to the plight of those exploited. Sanusi critiques not just the state itself but also the individuals who profit from its failures, demonstrating how personal interests can align with systemic corruption.

While both authors critique the role of state institutions, their narratives diverge in focus. Chinwuba emphasises the societal repercussions of state complicity, illustrating the impact of state policies on vulnerable populations.

The narrative captures the systemic violence that arises from a failure to protect those at risk, linking the state's decisions to real-world consequences for marginalised individuals. *Sanusi*, on the other hand, centres on the personal relationships within the trafficking network, revealing how individual choices and corrupt practices contribute to systemic exploitation. This focus on character dynamics provides a microcosmic view of the larger systemic issues.

In conclusion, both *Chinwuba* and *Sanusi* offer powerful critiques of state complicity in sex trafficking. They converge on the idea that state policies are often inadequate and counterproductive, enabling the very exploitation they seek to combat. However, their narratives differ in their emphasis—*Chinwuba* highlights the societal consequences of state actions, while *Sanusi* explores the personal dynamics within the trafficking network. Together, these texts underscore the urgent need for accountability and reform in addressing the complexities of state complicity in exploitation. The texts expose the systemic injustices that allow such practices to persist and to advocate for meaningful change in policies and enforcement, aligning with Hughes' (2005, p. 7) assertion that the state is one predominant demand factor to the sex trafficking of girls and women into sex slavery

4.2.4. Culture

Hughes (2004, p. 2; 2005, p. 8) posits that culture, in particular, indirectly creates a demand for sex-trafficked victims by normalising prostitution, portraying prostitution as glamorous, empowering, or a fast, easy way to make money. The cultural norms and cliques supporting claims that an alternate job for women is trading sex acts and that trading sex acts empower women to relegate the “violence and victimisation involved, or suggest that more

empowerment is the solution to exploitation and abuse of victims of the global sex trade” (Hughes, 2004, p. 3). Hughes’ (2004: 2005) views on culture as a demand factor to sex trafficking from the African perspective is affirmed in the works of researchers as Ayuk-Etang (2018), Burns (2005) amongst others, and renowned post-colonial writers like Buchi Emecheta, Juliana Makuchi, Tsitsi Dangarembga and Maureen Kambarami. In sum, all of these cultural factors as enlisted by Hughes (2004; 2005) and the aforementioned writers contribute to the valuing and the increasing form of prostitution, as well as the devaluing of women; resulting in the facilitation of the demand for sex trafficked women.

The cultural factors that are responsible for the indirect creation of the demand for sex-trafficked women and girls are evidenced in Chinwuba’s and Sanusi’s texts. One of the recurring motifs in Chinwuba’s and Sanusi’s texts is the assertion that Hughes (2004) holds, that: “in places where women and girls or certain ethnicities or classes of women and girls are devalued, there is more acceptance of prostitution and the exploitation of a female relative in prostitution to financially support the family” (p. 3). Further, she emphasises that these cultural attitudes “relegate women and girls to second class status in society” (Hughes, 2004, p. 3).

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba pictorially depicts how culture in some African societies devalues women into accepting prostitution as a means to provide support to their families. Chinwuba highlights how the dire quest to escape impoverishment positions women and/or girls in dilemmas—either to prostitute to survive or stay noble to perish. The narrator, in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), ironically avers that women and girls rarely have severe entrenchments of dilemma that emanate from nowhere, but their families. Therefore, the

familial entrenchments of dilemma leave the female characters caught between making decisions to protect their lives and those of their families or otherwise being labelled as bad “pikins” [children] (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 73), as Chinwuba calls them.

In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba explores the cultural attitudes toward poverty in Nigeria's Benin City, using the character of Faith's mother, Ma, to illustrate a desperate desire to escape destitution. The narrative tone oscillates between despair and irony, reflecting the complexities of survival in a harsh socio-economic landscape. Ma embodies a cultural mindset that justifies various means of acquiring wealth, except for those that involve direct violence. When she chastises Faith for suggesting that Europe's wealth might stem from drug smuggling, her statement that “as long as he does not kill anybody [...] anything short of that was acceptable for survival sake” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 90) reveals a moral framework shaped by necessity.

The significance of Ma's words lies in the irony they convey. By asserting that almost any means is permissible as long as it does not result in murder, Ma exposes a distorted moral compass born of desperation. This phrase encapsulates a survivalist ethos, suggesting that ethical considerations are secondary to the urgent need for financial security. The irony intensifies when considering that Ma, in her pursuit of wealth, inadvertently aligns herself with the very systems of exploitation she seeks to avoid. Her views imply an unconscious complicity in trafficking, highlighting a troubling acceptance of methods that may lead to the commodification of young women.

Chinwuba further critiques the cultural belief that the best path to wealth is through migration, often at the cost of women's wellbeing. The narrative tone

shifts to a more sombre reflection as it suggests that parents, particularly mothers, may prefer to have female children, believing that these daughters can migrate to Italy and return with financial resources. This irony underscores the reality that while families aspire for upward mobility, the journey often entails significant risks, including exploitation and trafficking. The colonial mindset of Faith's mother, Ma, that the surest way to generate wealth is by travelling abroad highlights this pervasive belief, reinforcing the notion that migration is viewed as a form of salvation despite the dangers involved.

In Ma's statement "anything short of that was acceptable for survival sake" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 90), Chinwuba employs imagery to illustrate the internalisation of a survivalist mentality. Ma's character serves as a representation of how desperation can lead individuals to compromise their moral values. Her acceptance of exploitative practices is further emphasised through a narrative voice that oscillates between critique and empathy, highlighting the complexities of cultural identity and survival. The narrative tone captures the tension between hope and despair, reflecting the lengths to which individuals will go to secure a better future for themselves and their families. Chinwuba narrates:

Now people were praying for female children that would eventually go to Italy when they reached puberty. People now wished pregnant women to "born" [sic] females, baby girls that would go to Italy, twelve years later, and take over the baton from a sister or aunt or cousin before them. Go and make money for me, my dear. Good daughter. Good pikin, what would I do without you? Go, the genitals have no measurement, no ruler. It does not finish. When you finish making money, you can marry (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65).

The narrative reveals a profound urgency within families to have female children who can migrate to Europe and secure financial stability. The excerpt

captures the desperation of families whose hopes centre on the potential of their daughters to escape poverty. This excerpt highlights the cultural shift in values, where having daughters is increasingly seen as an opportunity for financial gain. The repetition of phrases such as “good daughter” and “good pikin” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65) conveys a tone of both affection and expectation, suggesting that the value of a female child is now measured by her ability to generate income. This plea reveals a contrast to traditional views, where male children were typically preferred. As Ayuk-Etang (2018, p. 132) agrees with Kambarami (2006), who cites that the emerging quest for female offspring as economic assets illustrates a dramatic shift in cultural perceptions, reflecting a new reality where young girls become bait for wealth from the European sex markets.

Furthermore, Chinwuba’s use of the phrase “the genitals have no measurement, no ruler. It does not finish” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65) reinforces the commodification of female bodies. This metaphorical imagery implies that there are no limits to the exploitation that can be derived from women, as their worth is reduced to their capacity to generate wealth through sexual exploitation. The tone here resonates between resignation and acceptance, highlighting a societal norm that devalues women as individuals and elevates them as mere instruments of financial survival.

The character of Faith Moses is particularly emblematic of this cultural shift. Ma's advice for Faith to “go and make money for [her]” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65) underscores a significant transformation in the perception of female agency. The shift from referring to Faith as “she” to “he” implies a shift in African traditional gender roles, suggesting that Faith is expected to assume the responsibilities traditionally assigned to men. This reflects Kwegyir Aggrey’s

post-colonial feminist sentiment that what a man can do, a woman can do better, but it also indicates a troubling commoditisation of Faith, reducing her to a source of income rather than recognising her inherent worth. In this way, Faith's commoditisation affirms the assertions that Hughes (2004, p. 3) and Ayuk-Etang (2018, p. 132) hold regarding the status of the devalued woman, that since she continues to be a target of exploitation, the peripheral space of the woman is elevated to the centre for arrogant reasons. She is not regarded as a person but rather for the subsistence of her family by accruing wealth (Ayuk-Etang, 2018, p. 132)

Chinwuba's narrative critiques the implications of this transformation. By framing Faith as a figure who must provide support and cater for her family, the text illustrates how cultural expectations perpetuate the cycle of exploitation. Faith's value is not derived from her identity as a woman but from her capacity to generate wealth, affirming Hughes' assertion that women often become targets of exploitation, their agency co-opted by societal demands (Hughes, 2004, p. 3).

In conclusion, Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) offers a critique on the cultural dynamics of gender and exploitation in Benin City. Through the character of Ma and her expectations for Faith, the narrative reveals how economic desperation has led to the commoditisation of female bodies, where daughters are seen not as cherished individuals but as potential earners. The irony of this cultural shift—where the glamourisation of prostitution eclipses traditional values associated with marriage and dowry—challenges showing the complexities of survival in a socio-economic landscape that values wealth over humanity. Further, Chinwuba reflects on the consequences of such cultural

changes, urging a re-evaluation of the worth of women beyond their economic potential.

Also, the markets for sex slavery are better and more ready in Italy. Italians are the purchasers who are given sex services, highlighting the notion of purchasers and sex trafficked girls' reliance. The purchasers determine the degree of demand and price for sex or sex-trafficked females. In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), Chinwuba uses the comments of a man who taunts his daughter for wanting to preserve the mores of women by getting married to illustrate the great desire for "sex" for financial benefit in Italy. The narrator recounts the man's utterances:

Stupid girl. You are here entertaining your boyfriend for free. Follow your mates to Italy. Go and meet the white man and make money. Foolish girl. Stupid fool. You want to bring disgrace to me? Don't you see my mates riding cars sent by their children? You are here befriending men for free. You say you want to get married. If I hear that out of your mouth again, I will slap okra seeds from your smelly mouth (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65- 66).

The speaker's tone is laden with rage and disappointment. This bitterness underscores a generational conflict, where the father's frustration with his daughter's choices reflects societal pressures to conform to exploitative norms. The speaker's use of repetitive derogatory terms, such as "stupid girl" and "foolish girl" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65), serves to dehumanise his daughter, stripping her of individuality and reducing her to a mere object of shame. This lack of identification illustrates the speaker's desire to distance himself from her actions, as if her choices reflect not only on her but also on his own worth as a father. The narrative tone is accusatory, revealing a resentment towards his daughter for not adhering to the expectations of financial gain through sexual

exploitation. His demand for her to “follow your mates to Italy” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 66) highlights a cultural mentality that equates success with migration and the pursuit of wealth, particularly through relationships with white men whom he perceives as affluent.

As Ayuk-Etang (2018) notes, this cultural mindset compels young women in African households to view their bodies as commodities for financial gain, reinforcing the notion that the white man is affluent, whereas the African man is praised with worthlessness (p. 133). This perspective transforms marriage into an institution devoid of honour, particularly for black women, who are often seen as pawns in transactional sex slavery. The father’s animosity towards his daughter’s relationship with a local man underscores this shift in values; he views her potential marriage as a wasted opportunity compared to the financial prospects of engaging with foreign men.

Chinwuba’s narrative further illustrates the detrimental effects of this exploitation on the young girl’s identity and wellbeing. The phrase “you want to bring disgrace to me?” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 66) conveys the societal pressure placed on women to conform to familial and cultural expectations, highlighting the internalised shame associated with perceived failure to secure financial stability. The father’s violent threat—“I will slap okra seeds from your smelly mouth” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 66) —exemplifies the toxic masculinity that permeates this cultural dynamic, revealing how entrenched misogyny can manifest in familial relationships.

Moreover, the text critiques the commodification of black women’s bodies, as the speaker implicitly acknowledges that their value is now tied to their ability to sell themselves. This exploitation is further exacerbated by the

perception that white men view black women solely as sexual commodities. The narrative tone shifts from familial disappointment to an acknowledgment of the systemic issues that perpetuate such exploitation, illustrating the harsh realities faced by young women in their pursuit of a better life.

In conclusion, Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) depicts the intersections of gender, poverty and cultural expectations in contemporary Nigerian society. Through the bitter voice of the father, the text reveals the pressures that compel young women to commodify their bodies in a quest for financial stability. The portrayal of familial dynamics underscores the tragic consequences of a culture that prioritises economic gain over individual dignity, ultimately challenging readers to confront the pervasive exploitation that defines the lives of many women.

The urgency for females to migrate abroad in search of greener pastures is also illustrated in Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). In *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi narrates how some parents, often in complicity with traffickers, facilitate the migration of their daughters to work abroad, serving as caretakers for their families back in Nigeria. This narrative highlights a troubling cultural perception where the caretaking roles and responsibilities of adolescents are misinterpreted as markers of maturity. The narrative tone is one of resignation, suggesting that these cultural norms are so entrenched that they go unquestioned by the characters involved.

Wade, Eyo's father, embodies this cultural mindset, expressing enthusiasm about his daughter's potential journey to London with the trafficker Femi. He reassures his wife, stating that Eyo would "have a better life [and become one] of those people that go and come back every year with money" (Sanusi, 2009,

p. 23). This statement not only reflects Wade's prioritisation of financial gain over Eyo's wellbeing but also reveals the societal pressure to conform to the expectations of migration. The repetition of the phrase “go and come back every year with money” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 23) underscores the commodification of Eyo, reducing her value to her ability to generate income for the family. This aligns with Hughes’ (2004) assertion that in many cultures, women are viewed as property, first belonging to their families and then to their husbands, where their fates are dictated by male authority (p. 23).

Sanusi's stylistic shifts from metaphor to simile and irony are evident in how the mention of “*London* (sic) reverberates around the room like the forbidden fruit, as if it were meant to be spoken in more salubrious surroundings” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 22). The metaphor of “forbidden fruit” draws on biblical imagery, implying that the allure of London represents temptation and unattainable desires. This comparison suggests that the idea of migration is not only desirable but laden with moral implications, as forbidden fruit often signifies consequences for transgression.

The simile “*London* (sic) reverberated around the room like the forbidden fruit” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 23) conveys a sense of enchantment and danger. The auditory imagery of “reverberated” suggests that the very mention of London resonates with a captivating yet ominous undertone, signalling both hope and potential peril. It illustrates how the concept of migration dominates the characters’ thoughts, creating an almost hypnotic allure that overshadows the realities they face. The phrase “as if it were meant to be spoken in more salubrious surroundings” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 23) adds another layer of irony, implying that the dream of migration is so grand that it belongs to a realm far

removed from their current struggles. This contrast highlights the disparity between their harsh reality and the idealised vision of life abroad. The shift to irony becomes evident as the promise of a better life is juxtaposed against the harsh reality of exploitation that often accompanies such journeys. The tone underscores a dissonance between hopeful expectations of migration and the grim outcomes faced by many women, suggesting a critique of societal values that elevate financial gain over personal safety and dignity.

Kaze (2017) notes that girls, women, and African communities are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking due to the glorified perception of life outside their cultural context (p. 21). This notion of a revered world beyond cultural confines is central to understanding the high demand for sex-trafficked women and girls, as Sanusi illustrates the societal pressures that compel families to pursue these dangerous pathways. The implication is that the cultural association of caretaking roles with maturity leads to a tragic misunderstanding of the true costs of such migration, where the forced prostitution of African migrant girls becomes a normalised outcome of these beliefs. In this context, Burn's (2005) contention that "when [women or girls] are thought of as commodities or property, they are diminished and dehumanised and do not have the power to make their own life choices" (p. 23) is evident. The narrative critiques the dehumanisation of women inherent in these cultural frameworks, highlighting how societal perceptions of gender and maturity contribute to the systemic exploitation of young girls.

In conclusion, Sanusi's text illustrates the cultural dynamics that drive the migration of women and girls from Africa. By infusing narratives with a critical tone, Sanusi unveils the urgent need to address the societal norms that

perpetuate the commodification of women, highlighting the implications of cultural expectations on the lives of vulnerable individuals.

Further, in *Eyo* (2009), Sanusi presents instances of culture that envisage the possession of women by their families and spouses. This perspective resonates with Burn's (2005) assertion, which parallels Hughes' (2004) view that some cultures devalue women and render them vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Hughes notes the postcolonial notion that "in many cultures, a female is a property—first of her [family, thus] father [and mother] and then her husband. These men decide her fate and she is expected to obey" (p. 23). This assertion implies that, in such an African society, a woman is expected to adhere to the dictates of her family first and then to those of her husband, rendering girls and women subservient and susceptible to exploitation.

Sanusi highlights this domineering aspect of African culture through the characters of Bola and Eyo. Regarding Bola, her husband, Michael, orders her to migrate to Italy, following the example of other women like Stella, to earn money and support their household. His indifference to the nature of her profession—whether lawful or illicit—is evident in his assertion that "money doesn't discriminate" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 52). This phrase employs a pragmatic tone that reduces Bola's value to her economic output while ignoring the moral implications of her potential actions. The command "there is, of course, another way... we can't just sit here staring into space. All you have to do is go [abroad] and come back with money, just like the other women" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 52) signifies an authoritarian dynamic in their relationship. This authoritative diction illustrates how Bola's autonomy is stripped away, reflecting the broader cultural expectation that women should acquiesce to male authority.

Similarly, Eyo faces constant condemnation from her mother, Mama Olufunmi, and Ayo, her sister's friend, for returning to Nigeria. Mama Olufunmi's admonishments reveal a troubling adherence to societal norms when she insists that Eyo should have "stayed in London and endured being a sex slave 'for the sake of [her] family'" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 31). The phrase "endured being a sex slave" contrasts the idea of familial duty with the horrific reality of Eyo's potential fate, highlighting the brutal expectations placed on women to sacrifice their autonomy for family welfare. Mama Olufunmi's reiteration, "whatever happened to Eyo [was] no more or less than what other girls [went] through" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 333) serves to normalise the exploitation faced by women, suggesting that such experiences are a common burden rather than a unique tragedy. This normalisation of suffering becomes an acceptance of the status quo.

Ayo's comments further illustrate the insidious normalisation of exploitation. She states that "if she went to London, [she] would never leave [...] [she] still [would] want to go and [she] will do it [and that she knows the] guy. [She'll] do it" (Sanusi, 2009, p. 330). This dialogue employs a colloquial tone, reflecting the bitter resignation of young women who perceive prostitution as their only viable means of supporting their families. The phrase "do it" emphasises an acceptance of their reality, portraying the grim inevitability of their fates. The casual repetition serves to distance the speaker from the emotional weight of her situation, illustrating how entrenched these beliefs have become.

Through these interactions, Sanusi critiques the cultural expectation that women like Eyo should endure the harsh realities of sex work to provide for

their families. The advice Eyo receives—to return to London and become a sex slave again—reflects the tragic cycle of exploitation entrenched in societal norms. This cycle illustrates how women are often trapped by the very structures that claim to protect them, revealing a paradox that undermines their existence within these cultural frameworks.

In conclusion, Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009) reveals the pervasive cultural dynamics that govern the lives of women in African societies, where familial and societal pressures render them vulnerable to exploitation. Sanusi's narrative underscores the tragic consequences of viewing women as property, illuminating the systemic injustices that perpetuate their suffering and challenge the narratives that bind them to subservience.

Depictions of cultural norms that devalue women and girls, driving them into sex slavery in some West African societies, are replicated in Darko's *Beyond the Horizon* (1995). Darko illustrates how cultural norms perpetuate such exploitation through Mara's quote:

... after all, mother had taught me that a wife was there for a man for one thing, and that was to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure... then it was my duty as his wife to fulfil them ... I also saw this falling under 'obey and respect your husband', as my parents and family elders stringently repeated to me... that, too, was to me normal” (Darko, 1995, p. 13)

The use of anaphora in the repetition of “that” in the latter part of the quote emphasises the internalisation of these cultural beliefs. This repetition conveys a sense of inevitability and acceptance of gender roles, reinforcing the idea that compliance with such norms is expected and, for Mara, entirely normal. The phrase “to ensure his well-being, which included his pleasure” (Darko, 1995, p. 13) highlights the objectification of women, presenting them as mere

instruments for male satisfaction. This objectification suggests that a woman's worth is intrinsically linked to her ability to serve and please her husband, fostering a culture in which women are seen as commodities rather than individuals.

Darko's portrayal of cultural expectations resonates with Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003). The characterisation of girls in this text is directly impacted by societal beliefs that prioritise financial gain over their well-being. For example, when people pray for female children to go to Italy at puberty, it illustrates a disturbing cultural norm, thus, the urgent desires for "pregnant women to 'born' females, baby girls that would go to Italy, twelve years later, and take over the baton from a sister or aunt or cousin before them. Go and make money for me, my dear" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65). This expectation reduces girls to mere economic assets, reinforcing the notion that their primary purpose is to generate income for their families through exploitation. Similarly, another excerpt from *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) captures the harsh societal pressure on young women to abandon traditional aspirations, stating, "Stupid girl. You are here entertaining your boyfriend for free. Follow your mates to Italy. Go and meet the white man and make money" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 65). This dialogue exemplifies the cultural conditioning that promotes the idea that a girl's worth is directly tied to her financial contributions, illustrating how societal pressures drive women into exploitative situations.

In Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009), the character Bola, Michael's wife, also experiences similar cultural expectations (just as Mara) that dictate her life choices. Michael's assertion that "there is, of course, another way... we can't just sit here staring into space. All you have to do is go [abroad] and come back with money,

just like the other women” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 52) reflects the pressure on Bola to conform to societal norms that prioritise financial success over personal agency. This command reinforces the idea that women are expected to serve their husbands by seeking economic opportunities, often at the cost of their dignity and safety. Additionally, Wade's statement that Eyo “would take care of small children... except that she will be paid in pound sterling” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 22) highlights the underlying belief that women's roles are largely defined by their ability to provide financial support, even if it means engaging in exploitative work. The allure of financial gain abroad emphasises the cultural complicity that influences families to support the trafficking of girls, viewing it as a legitimate means of economic advancement.

While all three texts converge on the theme of cultural complicity in the demand for girls into sex slavery, they diverge in their portrayals of agency and resistance. Darko's Mara appears resigned to her fate, internalising cultural expectations as normal. In contrast, Chinwuba's Faith shows signs of conflict, grappling with the pressures to conform while longing for autonomy, as seen in her reflections on the sacrifices she must make to meet societal expectations. Sanusi's Bola and Eyo are bound by familial expectations and the promise of better opportunities abroad, suggesting a more complex negotiation of their identity as they weigh their familial desires against her own aspirations.

This cultural mindset aligns with Hughes's observation that “in many cultures, a female is a property—first of her [family, thus] father [and mother] and then her husband. These men decide her fate and she is expected to obey” (p. 23). Darko, Chinwuba and Sanusi's texts illustrate how women are treated as property, commodified for the economic benefit of their families and

husbands. The notion that a woman's primary purpose is to serve and obey reinforces the societal structures that enable exploitation and trafficking.

In conclusion, the analysis of Darko's quote, alongside the textual evidence from Chinwuba and Sanusi's texts, reveals the pervasive cultural norms that drive the demand for girls into sex slavery. Through literary devices such as anaphora and objectification, Darko illustrates how women are conditioned to accept their roles as subservient to men. Chinwuba and Sanusi similarly expose the damaging effects of cultural expectations that prioritise economic gain over the dignity and autonomy of women. Together, these texts serve as critiques of the societal structures that enable such exploitation, urging a re-evaluation of cultural values and their implications for women's rights and dignity.

From the extrapolations on culture in the excerpts from *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009), it is evident that the families of the females who are trafficked share a common cultural and familial background. Chinwuba and Sanusi both illustrate how these cultural dynamics create an environment that normalise and even encourage exploitation.

Chinwuba asserts that the parents of victims of human trafficking often recognise prostitution as a necessity, devoid of moral flaws. This perspective is encapsulated in the assertion that "the genital has no measurement, no ruler. It does not finish" (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 78). Here, Chinwuba employs a metaphor to illustrate the commodification of women's bodies, suggesting that their worth is limitless in the eyes of those who seek to exploit them. The phrase "no measurement, no ruler" conveys a sense of boundlessness, implying that women's bodies can be used without restrictions or moral considerations. This highlights a cultural acceptance of using one's body as a means to an end,

leading to the internalisation of exploitation. The metaphor not only underscores the objectification of women but also critiques societal norms that condone such views, highlighting the realities of the commodification of the female body. In contrast, Sanusi reiterates that parents compel their daughters to accept travel offers abroad, even when these opportunities may pose significant risks. He underscores the prioritisation of financial gain over the well-being of their children, stating that these parents expect their daughters to “endure” because “that is what women do. Women endure” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 26). This phrase encapsulates a cultural narrative that normalises suffering as an inherent aspect of womanhood. The repetition of “endure” emphasises the expectation placed on women to bear hardships silently, reinforcing the idea that suffering is a natural part of their existence. Sanusi’s focus on the psychological burden of endurance adds a layer of complexity to the cultural expectations placed on women. This expectation not only diminishes their agency but also frames their struggles as a badge of honour, creating a paradox where suffering is both expected and valorised.

Despite their differing emphases, Chinwuba and Sanusi converge in their portrayal of the cultural imperatives that lead to the acceptance of sex work. Chinwuba posits that a “good pikin” (child) is one who engages in prostitution to financially support her family, effectively framing this exploitation as a virtuous act. In Sanusi’s narrative, women who adhere to familial pressures to migrate and work in unfamiliar environments are similarly characterised as individuals who “endure” these cultural values, even when such values lead them into prostitution. However, there is a divergence in their conceptualisation of this endurance. For Chinwuba, the act of prostituting oneself is viewed as a

pragmatic response to economic hardship, while for Sanusi, it is portrayed as a tragic acceptance of imposed cultural narratives that dehumanise women. This difference highlights the complexity of cultural narratives surrounding gender and exploitation, where adherence to harmful traditions can be misconstrued as resilience.

In conclusion, both Chinwuba and Sanusi affirm that culture serves as a demand factor for sex slavery, illustrating how familial and societal expectations shape the experiences of women. Their narratives recognise the systemic injustices that perpetuate these harmful cultural norms, urging a critical examination of how such beliefs contribute to the exploitation of women. By addressing these points of convergence and divergence, the authors provide a nuanced understanding of the cultural dynamics that influence the trafficking of women and the societal structures that enable such exploitation.

4.3. Summary of the Chapter

This chapter analyses the demand for sex slaves in Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). It identifies four key drivers of sex trafficking, including purchasers, exploiters, culture and state factors. In summary, Hughes' (2004; 2005) *Theory on the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* explores four demand variables relevant to Chinwuba's and Sanusi's works. that the interplay of these factors creates a systemic environment that supports and sustains sex trafficking. Both authors show the need for societal change and policy reform to address these issues and protect vulnerable women from exploitation.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overview

In this chapter, a brief exposition of the entire study is presented. Also present are the conclusions which recapitulate the major findings. Finally, the recommendations of the study, which entails suggestions from the researcher are presented.

5.2 Summary

Slavery, a heinous act that Opoku Agyemang (1996, p. 1) calls it an “irredeemable evil” ever to happen in known human history, is a prevalent issue that deserves critical attention from writers, scholars, historians and citizenries the world over. From Bales’ (2009) and Weissbrodt’s (2002) views, slavery is not only a threat to humanity, but is prevalent in modern times, with its traces highly undetectable. Before transatlantic slavery, slavery scholars mention chattel and serfdom as the early forms of slavery. Regarding slavery, the two scholars—Kelvin Bales and David Weissbrodt align with Frederick Douglass’ (1865 cited in Bales, 2009) statement that the masses would avoid labelling an ‘exploitative social relation’ as slavery and instead use another term. Over time, slavery has consistently reinvented itself with different names, and it will likely do so again. We must remain watchful to see the new form this enduring threat might take and the disguise it may adopt. (Bales, 2009, p. 26)—which translates that the perpetrators of slavery would still practise slavery, but call slavery using different names; with these new names for slavery in the future signifying highly atrocious “new” slavery forms than the “old” slavery forms, he—Frederick Douglass and the other slaves in his era experienced. The different

forms of slavery, now, are what Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002) define as the 'modern' forms of slavery.

In the opinions of Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002), modern slavery forms comprise debt bondage, forced labour, child labour and child servitude, contract slavery, child slavery, sex slavery, forced prostitution, human trafficking, forced marriages, and the sale of spouses. Therefore, Frederick Douglass' (1865) forecast on the evolution of the "old" slavery forms in the future based on his experiences of "old" slavery in America is currently validated by recent novelists, poets, playwrights, essayists, historians and researchers who prevailed after Frederick Douglass' era. In response to the changing forms of slavery in the modern era, researchers such as Weitzer (2014), Bales (2012) and Allain & Bales, (2012) point out that the advancement of science and technology, as well as the rise of sophisticated means of global communication and travel, has accelerated the "new" form of slavery, human trafficking (which is connected to another illegal form of slavery, sex trafficking), which now ranks third in terms of profitability following drug and weapon trafficking.

Concurrently, one of the threats that human trafficking possesses, which is on the rise, is the enslavement of humans, especially, women and children as sex slaves. Due to the severity, of sex slavery as a result of the sex trafficking of women and children, past writers and slavery researchers have examined, given their insights and drawn attention to the impacts of sex slavery. Similarly, recent writers and slavery scholars are still exploring, providing intuition and expressing concerns on sex slavery and how sex slavery impinges on the victims, especially women and children. Both past and recent writers' and

researchers' works serve clarion calls to aid in curbing the atrocities of sex traffickers all over the globe. Therefore, the efforts of both past and recent writers as well as scholars to draw worldwide attention to the dangers of and/or the need to curb sex trafficking can be put in the words of Opoku Agyemang (1996, p. 9): "it is necessary to keep the story of slavery and the slave trade open-ended and to avoid closure; to clear the way to debate and to perpetually initiate rather than conclude the argument so that every new generation may visit it to quarry its lessons,"—a witty statement that highlights the necessity of playwrights, poets, novelists and researchers to continually write about and/or investigate slavery and its other forms, so that they provide new reasonings to slavery and its emerging forms.

As a student of literature, and part of the "new generation," this research explores the tales of slavery to "quarry out" some aspects of lessons regarding one of the "new" and threatening slavery forms—sex slavery. As such, this research investigates the representations of sex slavery in Ifeoma Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and Abidemi Sanusi's *Eyo* (2009). Chinwuba's and Sanusi's ways of chronicling sex slavery show the urgency for all individuals the world over to help curb the "new form this old monster" has assumed and the "new skin this old snake" has "come forth." Chinwuba and Sanusi make a valuable contribution to the ongoing efforts to raise awareness about the issue of sex slavery. Their work sheds light on the experiences of Black females who are victims of this heinous practice, spanning from childhood to adulthood and occurring both domestically and across borders. Their efforts are in line with those of other African female writers who have called attention to this urgent issue. In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009), the thematic areas analysed

in the study comprises the three conceptualised forms of sex slavery developed from *Classifications of Slavery Forms* by Bales (2009) and Weissbrodt (2002), thus coerced, indebted or indentured sex slavery. This study also describes how the two female writers show the similarities among all three sex slavery forms in terms of their defining characteristics. Again, emphasis is placed on the demand factors for the sex trafficking of females based on the *Demand Theory of Sex Trafficking* by Hughes (2004; 2005) in this study. Additionally, the analyses of this study highlight the depictions of sex trafficking of women and children in the texts of both writers. This underscores the unique emphasis that the writers place on raising awareness about the role of demand factors in sex trafficking, which are often overlooked in favour of focusing solely on the experiences of victims, particularly women and children.

Finally, the study brings to the fore Chinwuba's and Sanusi's approaches to dealing with the domestic and transnational sex enslavement of Black women and girls. With the emphasis on the strong irrevocable caveats that both female authors send out on the roles of the representations of sex slavery and how men, exploiters, state and culture create the demand for the sales of the bodies of Black women and girls in "sex markets" both home and abroad.

5.3. Key Findings

Globalisation, along with scientific and technological advancements, has greatly changed the ways sexual exploitation occurs, leading to various forms of sex slavery. In Ifeoma Chinwuba's *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), the modern trafficking of women is clearly illustrated through the story of three girls being prepared for shipment: "Three girls were ready for shipment. Her trip back home had not been in vain. She had encountered so many girls in Nigeria. Faith,

Doris, Amaka... The important thing was that they had a body to sell, from which they would pay her back all the money she had invested in the various arrangements for their journey” (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 59-60). This passage highlights how women are treated as commodities and shows how modern transport has made trafficking quicker and more widespread compared to historical forms of slavery. Therefore, modern transportation has accelerated the trafficking of women, commodifying their bodies in the process.

The texts categorise sex slavery into three main types: coerced, indebted, and indentured. Each type reveals different levels of exploitation. In Sanusi’s *Eyo*, the character Eyo is objectified by Stella, who states, “Everything here is mine” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 132). This assertion strips Eyo of her identity and humanity, reducing her to a mere possession. Stella’s treatment of Eyo demonstrates the coercive nature of sex slavery in Nigeria, while her later role in the U.K. as an indebted and indentured slave shows how this exploitation crosses borders. Therefore, the different forms of sex slavery reveal complex layers of exploitation that affect women’s identities and autonomy.

The methods used by those who perpetrate sexual slavery—such as force, debt, and false contracts—emphasise the cruel and dehumanising nature of this crime. Faith’s experience serves as a powerful example: she is raped by the Italian police for lacking travel documents, falsely indebted to Madam Lizzy for ninety million lira, and forced to sign a contract that ties her to a life of sexual servitude. This disturbing narrative reveals the similarities between slavery and sex slavery, both involving ownership, control, and exploitation, particularly affecting women and children. Madam Stella and Johnny reinforce this idea when they tell Eyo, “You don’t steal from me, Eyo. Everything here is mine”

(Sanusi, 2009, p. 132), highlighting how women's bodies are treated as commodities, stripped of their autonomy and rights. The use of force, debt, and false contracts exemplifies the systemic dehumanisation inherent in sexual slavery.

The research indicates that these types of sex slavery are not separate; individuals can move between them. Faith's journey—from being coerced into sex by the police to becoming indebted to Madam Lizzy and ultimately becoming an indentured servant—illustrates how victims can fall into multiple layers of exploitation. This fluidity complicates the understanding of sex slavery, revealing a wide range of victimisation influenced by cultural, economic and social factors. Therefore, victims can transition between different forms of sex slavery, highlighting the complex nature of their exploitation.

Furthermore, the role of black women in the sex trade, both as victims and facilitators, highlights the complicity within their communities. Madam Stella's shift from being a victim of Tayo Asemota to becoming an exploiter herself shows a tragic irony: those who have suffered often become part of the very system that oppressed them. Her actions in creating a market for unwanted girls, as she "inadvertently started the prostitution market," demonstrate how exploitation continues (Chinwuba, 2003, p. 86). This complicity reveals the complex relationship between victimhood and agency, illustrating that survival sometimes requires participation in the systems that enslave others. Thus, the cycle of exploitation often leads victims to become complicit in the very systems that oppress them.

In summary, the analysis of Chinwuba and Sanusi's works clearly show that the demand for sex slavery is driven by key factors: purchasers seeking sexual

services, exploiters profiting from trafficking, cultural norms that normalise prostitution, and inadequate state policies that fail to protect vulnerable women. These factors create a strong environment that pushes women into sex slavery. Understanding these elements is essential for addressing the issue and ensuring that women's rights and dignity are respected, highlighting the urgent need for effective changes in society and policy to combat sex trafficking. That is, the demand for sex slavery is fuelled by a combination of societal, economic and policy-related factors that must be addressed to protect vulnerable women.

5.4 Conclusions

This study concludes that various representations of sex slavery emerge from specific paradigms related to their modes of occurrence, which are conceptualised as “coerced, indebted, and indentured” forms of sex slavery. This finding is supported by the narrative of Faith in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), where she is manipulated into a life of servitude through coercion, highlighting the abrupt power dynamics involved.

Furthermore, it is evident that, like traditional slavery, the representations of sex slavery in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003) and *Eyo* (2009) are characterised by dehumanisation and exploitation, predominantly affecting women and children. For example, Stella’s declaration, “Everything here is mine” (Sanusi, 2009, p. 132), explicitly strips Eyo of her identity, illustrating the severe impact of ownership and control inherent in these exploitative relationships.

The analysis also reveals that the forms of sex slavery overlap, with victims frequently transitioning between coercion, indebtedness and indentured slavery. Faith’s trajectory, in *Merchants of Flesh* (2003)—from being coerced into sex by the police to becoming indebted to Madam Lizzy—exemplifies this fluidity,

demonstrating how one form of exploitation can lead to another.

Moreover, the study highlights the complicity of Black women in the sex trade, which complicates the narrative of victimhood. This is illustrated by Stella's transformation from victim to exploiter in *Eyo* (2009), reflecting the tragic irony that those who are vulnerable may also engage in the exploitation of others.

Lastly, the research identifies cultural attitudes, purchaser preferences, corrupt state practices, and exploiters as key demand variables that drive sex slavery. In *Merchants of Flesh* (2003), vulgar comments regarding daughters as "objects" for wealth underscore how cultural perceptions can propel women into sex trafficking. Additionally, the role of corrupt state officials, as Luca, the police commissioner and the doctor, in facilitating these practices creates an environment that fosters exploitation.

In summary, the findings of this study underscore the urgent need for effective societal and policy changes to combat the complex issue of sex trafficking and to protect the rights and dignity of vulnerable women and children.

5.5 Recommendations

Sex slavery is now a growing concern worldwide, especially in Africa, not to mention, Sub-Saharan Africa—where poverty coupled with viable factors for sex trafficking persists. It is in this light that this study makes recommendations concerning the responses given to the research questions of the study.

Foremost, from the analysis of the study, it is evident that cliques exist in sex slavery, thus, madams or sex slaves do form cliques. Based on the analyses, the formation of these cliques come about as a result of several reasons. Examples of the reasons include solidarity to face fellow oppressors and foes,

emancipation from sex slavery and oppression or oppressing sex slaves or newly acquired sex slaves or their kind. Therefore, this study recommends the conduct of the study, *Cliquism in West African Neo-Sex Slavery Novels: A Tool for Solidarity, Emancipation or Oppression in the Interstice of Sex Slavery?*

Moreso, a cursory observation of the analyses of the study indicates the agility of the Nigerian girl or woman trying effortlessly to escape the precarious colonial “African mentality” culturally associated with her status quo by her gender—that is, by being a girl or boy, and thus remains stuck to what Adichie (2008) terms as “real” cultural heritage for African women. It is for this reason that this study recommends a research with a focus on both male and female voices regarding sex slavery, thus, a study: *The Male Versus Female Authorial Voices: Navigating the Spaces of female Sex Slavery in Nigerian Novels from a Post-Colonial Standpoint*.

Further, as every research has its constraints, so has this study. This study centres on the representations of sex slavery—coerced, indebted and indentured and the demand variables of sex trafficking that hastens the recruitment of Black females in sex slavery. This study, therefore, recommends research under the *Analysis of Neologisms in Contemporary West African Sex Slavery Narratives*—thus, on usage, forms and meanings of neologisms like: “ashawo” [harlot], “nyash” [buttocks] and “bobby” [breast], among others.

REFERENCES

- Adichie, C. N. (2008). Nigeria's immorality about hypocrisy, not miniskirts. *The Hindu*, April 4. Retrieved, September 26, 2022 from: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/nigerias-immorality-about-hypocrisy-not-miniskirts/article1232734.ece>
- Adichie, C. N. (2015). *We should all be feminists*. London, UK: Harper Collins.
- Adichie, N. C. (2013). *Americanah*. Lagos: Farafina.
- Adimora-Ezeigbo, A. (2008). *Trafficked*. Lagos: Literamed Publications.
- Aghatise, E. (2004). Trafficking for prostitution in Italy: Possible effects of government proposals for legalization of brothels. *Violence Against Women*, 10(10), 126-1155.
- Ajaegbo, I. (2013). *Sarah House*. Ibadan: Bookcraft.
- Allain, J. & Bales, K. (2012). Slavery and its definition. *Global Dialogue*. 14. 1-15.
- Anderson, B., & Davidson, J. O. (2002). *Trafficking – a demand-led problem?* A multi-country pilot study. Sweden, Stockholm: Save the children Sweden. Retrieved March 25, 2022 from: <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/doccenter/1011/trafficking-%E2%80%93-a-demand-led-problem-a-multi-country-pilot-study>
- Araujo, A. L. (2020). *Slavery in the age of memory: Engaging the past*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Aronowitz, A., Theuermann, G., & Tyurykanova, E. (2010). *Analysing the business model of trafficking in human beings to better prevent the crime*. Vienna, Austria: OSCE office of the special representative and co-ordinator for combating trafficking in human beings.

- Ayuk-Etang, E. N. M. (2018). Migration, dependence, freedom and independence in Ifeoma Chinwuba's Merchant of flesh. In *Living in Dependence: Voices of African women in Literature and Culture* (97-114). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Bales, K. (2005). *Understanding global slavery: A reader*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bales, K. (2012). *Disposable people: New slavery in the global economy* (3rd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bales, K., & Robbins, P. T. (2001). "No one shall be held in slavery or servitude": A critical analysis of international slavery agreements and concepts of slavery. *Human Rights Review*, 2(2), 18–45.
- Bales, K., Trodd, Z., & Williamson, A. K. (2009). *Modern Slavery: The secret world of 27 million people*. Oxford: Oneworld.
- Bauman, Z. (1998). *Globalisation: The human consequences*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bezan, S. (2012). Shame as a structure of feeling: Raped and prostituted in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and Futhi Ntshingila's *Shameless*. *Journal of African Literature Association*, 7(1), 15-24.
- Black, G. S. (2003). *Deconstructing John*. Paper presented at the Demand Dynamics Conference, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois.
- Brace, L. (2004). *The politics of property: Labour, freedom and belonging*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press.
- Burn, S. M. (2005). *Women across cultures: A global perspective*. (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.

- Carling, J. (2006). Migration, human smuggling and from Nigeria to Europe. *IOM Migration Research Series*, 23. Geneva.
- Chinwuba, I. (2003). *Merchants of flesh*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books Limited.
- Coy, M., Horvath, M., & Kelly, L. (2007). *Its just like going to the supermarket: Men buying sex in East London. Report for safe exit*. London: London Metropolitan University.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design* (5th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Dangarembga, T. (1988). *Nervous Conditions*. London, UK: The Women's Press.
- Darko, A. (1995). *Beyond the Horizon*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Douglass, F. (1865). *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass, an American slave*. New York: Signet Classics.
- Ebebe Eyang, A. & Edung, A. (2017). The Dynamics of economism and human trafficking in Chika Unigwe's *On black sisters' Street* and Ifeoma Chinwuba's *Merchants of flesh*. *A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 14(2), 103-120.
- Emecheta, B. (1974). *Second class citizen*. London, UK: Alison and Busby.
- Emecheta, B. (1976). *The bride price*. London, UK: Heinemann.
- Griffiths, G. (2000). *African literatures in English: East and West*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Hughes, D. (2005). *The Demand for victims of sex trafficking*. Rhode Island: University of Rhode Island.

- Hughes, M. D. (2004). *Best practices to address the demand side of sex trafficking*. Rhode Island: University of Rhode Island.
- Kambarami, M. (2006). *Femininity, sexuality and culture: Patriarchy and female subordination in Zimbabwe*. Lagos, Nigeria: African Regional Sexuality Resource Centre.
- Kara, S. (2009). *Sex trafficking: The inside business of modern slavery*. New York, U.S.: Columbia University Press.
- Kara, S. (2011). *Sex trafficking: The inside business of modern slavery*. New York, U.S.: Columbia University Press.
- Kaze, D. E. (2009). Environment as script of poverty in the third generation Nigerian novel: A reading of Kaine Agary's *Yellow-yellow*, Helon Habila's *Waiting for an angel* and Abidemi Sanusi's *Eyo*. *Research Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 3(2), 13–21.
- Klein, H. S. (2013). *The Atlantic slave trade*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Koomson, B. P. (2010). *A vision of self-redemption: A thematic study of resistance to slavery in the works of two contemporary Ghanaian writers* (Published master's thesis). University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana.
- Ligaga, D. (2019). Ambiguous agency in the vulnerable trafficked body: Reading Sanusi's *Eyo* and Unigwe's *On black sisters' street*. *Tydskrif Vir Letterkunde*, 56 (1), 74-88.
- Lincoln, A. (1854). *Speech on the Kansas-Nebraska Act*. Springfield, IL: [Historical Source].

- Longdet, S. P. & Ezekulie, J. C. (2022). Double dilemma of the female immigrant: A psychoneurotic reading of Chika Unigwe's *On black sisters' street* and Abidemi Sanusi's *Eyo*. *NTAtvc J of Comm.* 2022;6(2), 116 – 128.
- Lovejoy, P. E. (2000). *Transformation in slavery*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lutya, M. T., & Lanier, M. (2012). An integrated theoretical framework to describe human trafficking of young women and girls for involuntary prostitution. In J. Maddock (Ed.), *Public health - Social and behavioral health* (pp. 555–570). Rijeka, Croatia: InTech.
- Macleod, J., Farley, M., Anderson, L., & Golding, J. (2008). *Challenging men's demand for prostitution in Scotland: A research report based on interviews with 110 men who bought women in prostitution*. Glasgow: Women's Support Project.
- Makuchi, J. (1997). *Gender in African women's writing*. Indiana: U. P.
- Mama, A. (1997). Feminism or femocracy? State feminism and democratisation in Nigeria. *Africa Development*, 22(1), 37-58.
- Mansson, S. A. (2006). Men's demand for prostitutes. *Sexiologies*, 15, 87-92.
- Mende, J. (2019). *A universal theory of human rights: Decoding modern slavery*. Berlin, Germany: Springer.
- Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Monzini, P. (2005). *Sex traffic*. London, UK: Zed Books.

- Nadaswaran, S. (2011). Analyzing sex trafficking in neo-liberal Nigeria through Nigerian women's writings. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 59-64.
- Nadaswaran, S. (2013). *Out of the silence: Igbo women writers and contemporary Nigeria* (Doctoral dissertation, UNSW Sydney).
- Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. (1986). *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature*. Nairobi, Kenya: James Currey.
- Njoh, J. A. & Ayuk-Etang, E. N. M. (2012). Combating forced labour and human trafficking in Africa: The role of endogenous and exogenous forces. *African Review of Economics and Finance*, 4(1).
- Nnaemeka, O. (2003). Nego-feminism: Theorizing, practicing, and pruning Africa's way. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 29(2), 357–385.
- Nutsukpo, F. M. (2019). Human trafficking and the African woman: A critical study of Darko's *Beyond the horizon* and Adimora-Ezeigbo's *Trafficked*. *Journal of Gender and Power*, 12 (2), 117-135.
- Obi-Ani, P., Obasi, I., & Ugwuoke, C. U. (2020). A historical perspective of Nigerian immigrants in Europe. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7(1), Article 1796224.
- Okolie, J. N. M. & Chukwunwike, C. C. (2021). Female sex slavery in Chika Unigwe's *On black sisters' street* and Chris Abani's *Becoming Abigail*. *University of Nigeria Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*. 3, (1), 23-32.
- Opoku-Agyemang, K. (1996). *Cape Coast castle*. Accra: Afram Publications (Ghana) Ltd.

- Oppong Adjei, D. (2016). Domination in sexual relations in the novels of Ayi Kwei Armah. *International Journal of Research in the Humanities*, 5(2), 1-34.
- Patterson, O. (1982). *Slavery and social death: A comparative study*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Patterson, O., & Zhuo, X. (2018). Modern trafficking, slavery, and other forms of servitude. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 44, 407-439.
- Perbi, A. A. (2004). *A History of indigenous slavery in Ghana*. Accra: Sub-Saharan Publications.
- Petit, P. (2008). Republican freedom: Three axioms, four theorems. *Republicanism and political theory*, 104, 45-56.
- Pipes, R. (1981). *The formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and nationalism, 1917-1923*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Sanusi, A. (2009). *Eyo*. Nairobi: World Alive Press.
- Shelley, L. (2003). Trafficking in women: The business model Approach. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 10(1), 119-131.
- Slavery, M. D. (2022). *Human trafficking*. Retrieved March 23, 2023, from https://www.renateeurope.net/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/HumanTraffickingSVD_ENG1.pdf
- South African Law Reform Commission (SALRC). (2009). *Discussion paper 0001/2009, project 107: Sexual offences: Adult prostitution*. Pretoria, South Africa: South African Law Reform Commission.
- Soyinka, W. (1996). *The open sore of a continent: A personal narrative of the Nigerian crisis*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

- Taylor, M., & Quayle, E. (2003). *Child pornography: An internet crime*. Hove, UK: Brunner Routledge.
- Unigwe, C. (2009). *On black sisters' Street*. London: Vintage Books.
- Uwakwe, U. D. (2018). Self-enslavement in Unigwe's *On black sisters' street* and Adichie's *Americanah*. *International Journal of Gender and Development Issues*, 1(8), 397- 409.
- Van Rossum, M. (2021). *A history of slavery and emancipation*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Vogel, D. (2017). The concept of demand in the context of trafficking in human beings. *Psychosociological Issues in Human Resource Management*. 5(1), 193–234.
- Weissbrodt, D. and Anti-slavery international (2002). *Abolishing slavery and its contemporary forms*. New York: United Nations.
- Weitzer, R. (2014). New directions in research on human trafficking. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653(1), 6–24.
- Wijaya, C. S. (2019). *The analysis of slavery in Twelve Years a Slave written by Solomon Northup* (Unpublished Bachelor's thesis). Universitas Buddhi Dharma, Tangerang, Indonesia.