


## Chapter 3

# Young Women Survivors Speak About Structural Violence and Vulnerabilities to Human Trafficking

**Kemi Oyebanji**

*University of the Western Cape, South Africa*

**Sisa Ngabaza**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4137-9566>

*University of the Western Cape, South Africa*

### ABSTRACT

*Human trafficking is a global issue that most countries have battled to control. It is exploitative, abusive, and violates human rights. Generally, it is seen as modern-day slavery. Despite several measures by different countries to combat trafficking, it continues to spread. Although men, women, and children are all vulnerable to trafficking, women and girls are more trafficked due to gendered intersectional factors that place them in vulnerable conditions. This chapter draws on academic work that explored a group of young women's lived experiences of trafficking at a border town in Nigeria. Using a feminist lens and working within a qualitative framework, in-depth interviews were conducted with young women who survived human trafficking. A qualitative thematic analysis was employed for data analysis. The authors draw on these young women's voices to explore how gendered intersectional factors create and perpetuate vulnerability to trafficking. The chapter also argues for the necessity to empower women as a protective measure against trafficking and for social justice.*

### INTRODUCTION

Initially, the chapter examines the incidence of human trafficking globally, looking at international conventions and organizations that promote the prevention of trafficking. Following this, the chapter

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-4964-6.ch003

unpacks scholarship on women's vulnerabilities to trafficking, emphasizing the factors causing and sustaining such risks, and highlighting the importance of this work for gender justice. This is followed by a detailed description of the methodology used in the main study on which this chapter draws. All ethical protocols were taken into consideration during data collection. Women's voices are then presented in detail, showing intersectional socio-cultural and economic factors/challenges that render them vulnerable. The chapter concludes with a discussion around the need to empower women economically in order to achieve gender justice in the future.

## **BACKGROUND**

Human trafficking, according to Article 3(a) of the United Nations Palermo Protocol, is seen as,

*“recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force, other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation”.*

Human trafficking does not occur in silos. Multiple social systems simultaneously work together to create vulnerability, providing fertile ground for traffickers to target vulnerable groups (Lutya & Lanier, 2012). Several intersecting factors contribute to the vulnerabilities of different groups of people to trafficking. For example, the structure of the immediate environment where people live, their communities, the country, and the region as a whole, all play different roles in creating and sustaining vulnerability to trafficking (Bello & Olutola, 2020). Despite the fact that people of all ages can be trafficked, research shows that young women and girls remain the most vulnerable group (Masika, Williams, & Jordan, 2002) and an easy target for traffickers. Although these findings are decades old, the Global Report on Trafficking in Persons (2020) confirms continued high rates of female victims compared to any other population group. Furthermore, the same report states that for every ten victims found globally in 2018, five were women and two were girls, making women the most trafficked group in 2018. Such positioning of women calls for an exploration of factors that create and promote their vulnerability to trafficking.

## **HUMAN TRAFFICKING: AN OVERVIEW**

As of now, human trafficking continues to have a huge impact on the world as it continues to be a global issue. Almost all the countries in the world are affected by human trafficking either as the source, transition or destination country (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2018). Although human trafficking is a global phenomenon, it can also be found within the same country. Evidence of the exact number of victims of human trafficking remains unknown, but some statistics suggest that over 40 million victims suffer from human trafficking worldwide (International Labour Organization [ILO], 2017). Another estimate predicts that 24.9 million individuals worldwide are currently victims of human trafficking, trapped in conditions of forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation in different sectors (ILO, 2017). Of these trafficked persons, 21% were men, 28% were children, and 51% were women, according to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime ([UNODC], 2016) on Trafficking in Persons.

16 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:  
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/young-women-survivors-speak-about-structural-violence-and-vulnerabilities-to-human-trafficking/310984](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/young-women-survivors-speak-about-structural-violence-and-vulnerabilities-to-human-trafficking/310984)

## Related Content

---

### Mobility and Service Innovation: A Critical Examination of Opportunities and Challenges for the Canadian Public Sector

Jeffrey Roy (2020). *Open Government: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications* (pp. 34-48).  
[www.irma-international.org/chapter/mobility-and-service-innovation/235172](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/mobility-and-service-innovation/235172)

### Racialized Perceptions of School Violence Suspensions of African-American Students

Jeffrey Herron and Morghan Vélez Young-Alfaro (2021). *Research Anthology on Empowering Marginalized Communities and Mitigating Racism and Discrimination* (pp. 1284-1302).  
[www.irma-international.org/chapter/racialized-perceptions-of-school-violence-suspensions-of-african-american-students/277625](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/racialized-perceptions-of-school-violence-suspensions-of-african-american-students/277625)

### Agency at Play for Collective Impact in Human Services Systems: A Case Study of Digital Games for Change as Design Justice Interventions

Prithi Yadav, Manuela B. Taboada and Nicole Vickery (2022). *Social Justice Research Methods for Doctoral Research* (pp. 159-181).  
[www.irma-international.org/chapter/agency-at-play-for-collective-impact-in-human-services-systems/293622](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/agency-at-play-for-collective-impact-in-human-services-systems/293622)

### The Ungovernable Female Agency: Ingobernable and Resistancia

Berrin Yankkaya (2021). *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Women, Voice, and Agency* (pp. 219-253).  
[www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-ungovernable-female-agency/259583](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-ungovernable-female-agency/259583)

### Preparing College Students to Facilitate Action Civics Among K-12 Students

Jason Fitzgerald, Alison K. Cohen and Barbara Ferman (2019). *Handbook of Research on Education for Participative Citizenship and Global Prosperity* (pp. 447-457).  
[www.irma-international.org/chapter/preparing-college-students-to-facilitate-action-civics-among-k-12-students/217230](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/preparing-college-students-to-facilitate-action-civics-among-k-12-students/217230)