

"Japa" or Economic Migration: A Trap for Human Trafficking in Africa

Executive Summary

This brief highlights the correlation between economic migration and human trafficking in Africa. Africa is second to Asia as the continent with the highest rate of human trafficking. Although the UN has made human trafficking illegal, the income level of many African countries has significantly increased the vulnerability of Africans to falling into the ensnaring hands of the traffickers. Socio-political issues, ethno-religious conflicts, climate change among others have been advanced as the drivers of migration. This brief, however, from the survey conducted, singled out economic reason as the most compelling driver of today's irregular migration. Of course, other factors can be reinforcing, human trafficking mostly thrives on the desperation of potential migrants migrating for greener pasture. This submission resonates with the results of the survey conducted, where a substantial number of the respondents, despite their awareness of the danger of migrating through irregular routes, or being suspicious of exploitation by their travel sponsors, are still willing to move. Importantly, the brief reports that women and girls are worse off economically compared to men and boys on the continent. This factor makes women and girls more susceptible to trafficking, despite more willingness by men to want to embark on illegal migration or subject themselves to exploitation by their travel sponsors.

1.0 Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a phenomenon that captures vulnerability and predation simultaneously. It is a modern problem where predators (human traffickers) take advantage of the susceptibility of others (trafficked persons) to exploit them, especially beyond national borders.

1.1 Definition according to the UN Protocol

Note: the 2000 UN protocol on prevention, suppression, and punishing of trafficking in persons particularly women and children described trafficking as the

I. recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of

- a. Threat or use of force or other means of coercion*
- b. Of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power*

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- c. Or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve consent of a person*
- d. Having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation in the form of sexual abuse, forced labor, or slavery or organ harvesting*
 - Ii. The protocol provides that the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth above shall be deemed inconsequential where any means described above have been deployed*
 - Iii. Recruitment, transportation, transfer or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered trafficking in persons even if this does not involve the use of any of the means previously stipulated*
 - Iv. Child shall mean any person below the age of 18.*

1.2 What do we seek to know?

The rate of human trafficking on the African continent is only second to Asia. What drives human trafficking on the continent can be attributed to terrorism, ethno-religious crises, climate change, sexual orientation persecution, economic hazards, and others.

Notably, human trafficking thrives on the susceptibility of the victims. Amongst many reasons that could make the victims of human trafficking vulnerable, we suspect, lack of economic means or resources is a strong factor to reckon with. This, in fact, finds corroboration in our survey result, where 31 percent of our respondents, despite suspecting exploitation by their traveling sponsors, are still willing to travel through the same means or sponsors. Meanwhile, 27 percent of our respondents are contemplating to go through the same sponsors. What is, however, not surprising about the aforementioned response is that 99 percent of our respondents are willing to relocate to other countries for better economic opportunities. Therefore, we seek to know if there is a correlation between economic migration and human trafficking in Africa, bearing in mind gender dimension in the process.

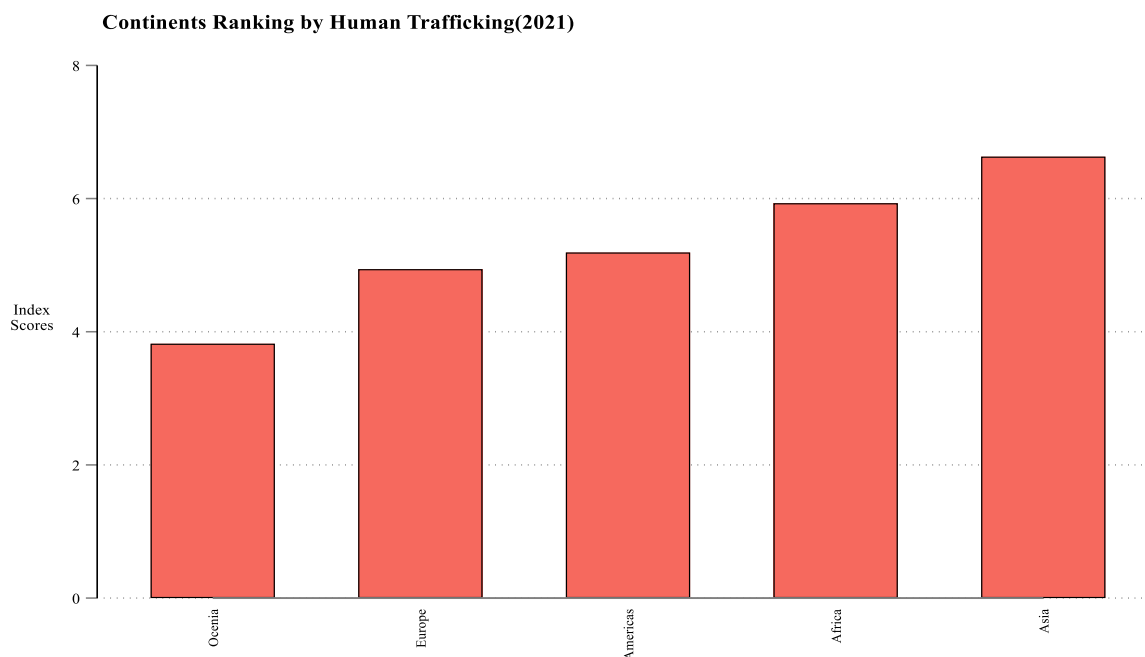
2.0 Infographics

2.1 Ranking by Human Trafficking

As at 2021, according to the Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2021), Africa was ranked second based on the rate of human trafficking taking place on the continent, with only Asia scoring more on the index as shown in figure 2.1 below.

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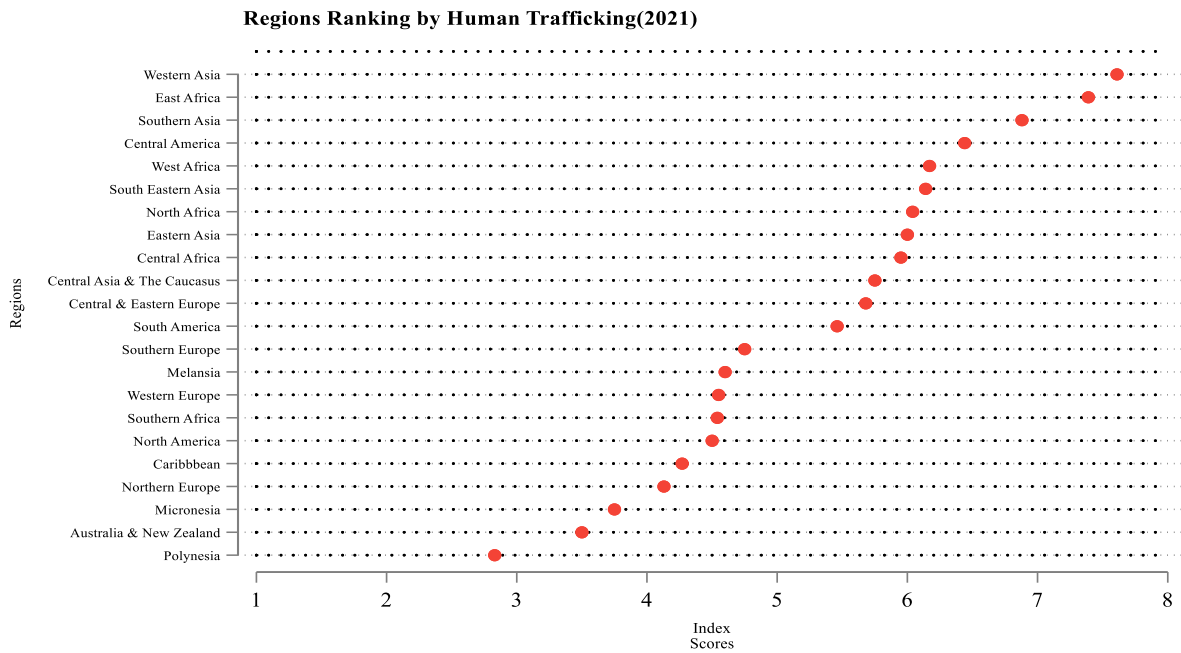
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Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime(2021)
Figure 2.1

It is, however, noteworthy that regions of the world differ in their records of this transnational organized crime. Regions in the same continent do not necessarily witness human trafficking at the same rate (see figure 2.2). Southern African region has the least rate of human trafficking, with over 4.5 transnational organized crime index score, in Africa, and one of the least scores around the world. On the contrary, East Africa has the highest human trafficking rate in Africa and second highest in the world next to West Asia.

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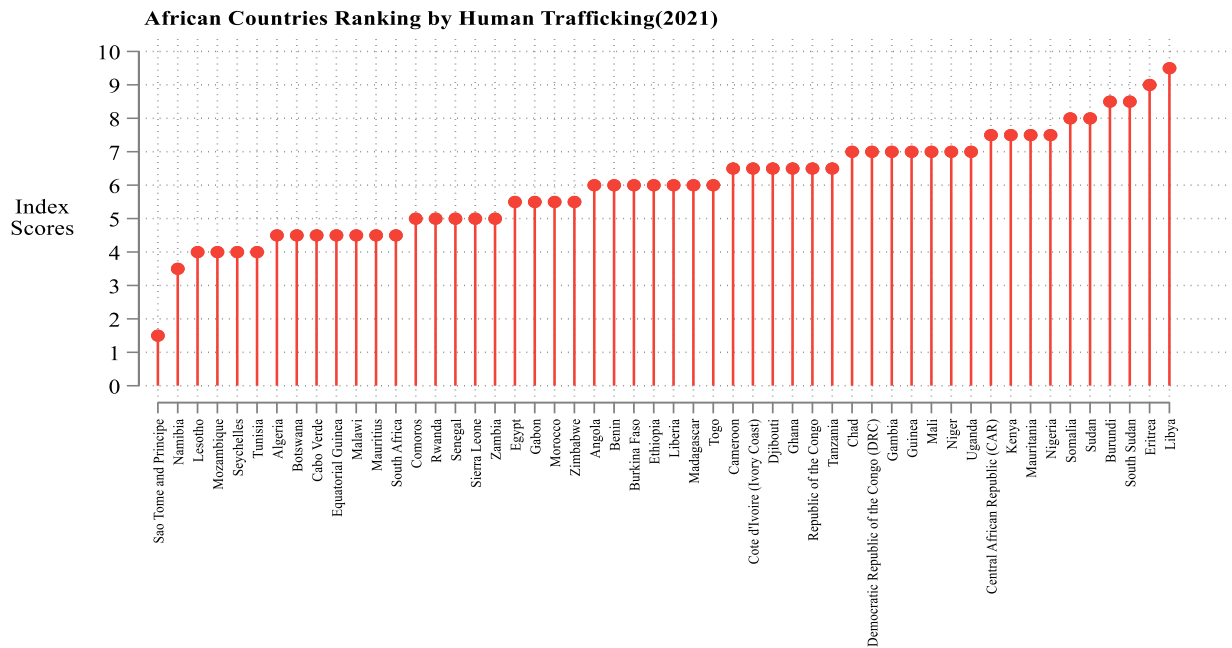


Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime(2021)
Figure 2.2

Just as regions of the same continent differ, countries on the continent of Africa differ in their human trafficking rate (see figure 2.3). Sao Tome and Principe has the least record of human trafficking on the continent, while Libya is right on top of the chart. The question then is; why is there so much margin between the two countries? That is what we seek to know, given an economic dimension.

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Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime(2021)
Figure 2.3

However, before further analysis, it is expedient to have an overview of migration in Africa. Human trafficking is usually a transnational organized crime and it does not only occur through illegal routes alone, hence the importance of looking into Africa’s net migrations.

3.0 Net Migrations

Net migration refers to the difference between emigration (outflow) and immigration (inflow). A country records negative migration if its emigration is more than its immigration. On the other hand, it records positive net migration if its immigration is more than its emigration. However, owing to the difficulties of tracking both the immigration and emigration, it is difficult to have accurate data of net migration of countries. However, given the UN DESA’s time series data on net migration, figure 3.1 below shows the net migrations of African countries or Africa from 1990 to 2022. Observably, Africa recorded its highest migration deficit in 2011. It improved thereafter but plunges downward in the negative after 2020. It is then unsurprising that Africa’s human trafficking index score as at 2021 was high and only second to Asia.

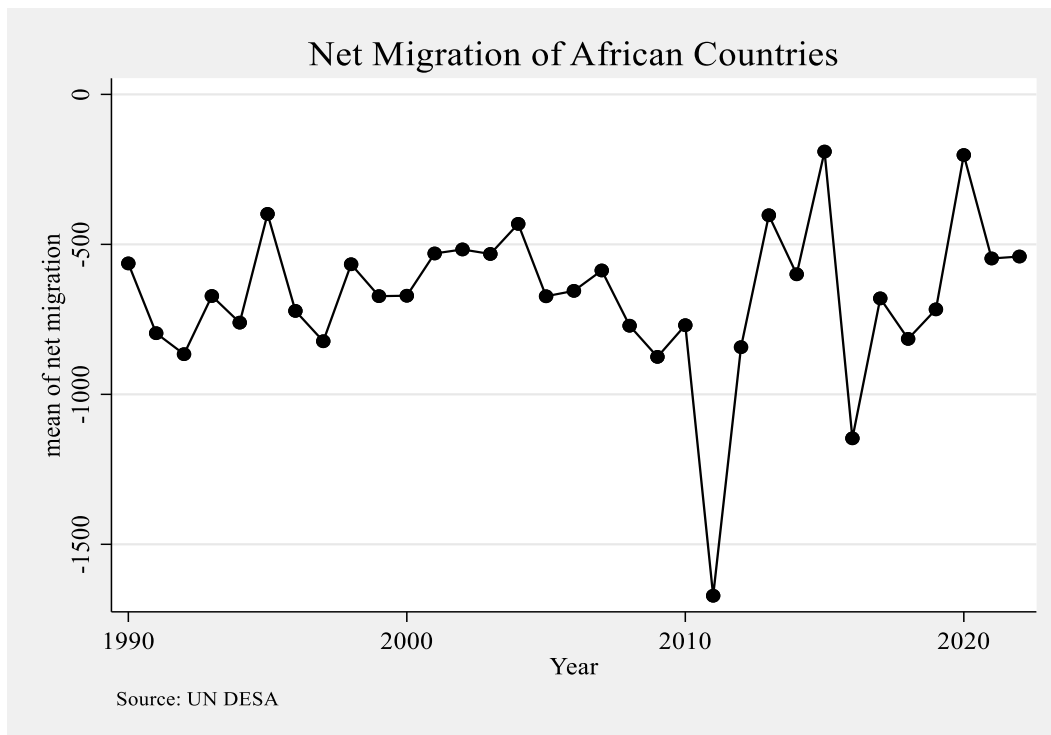


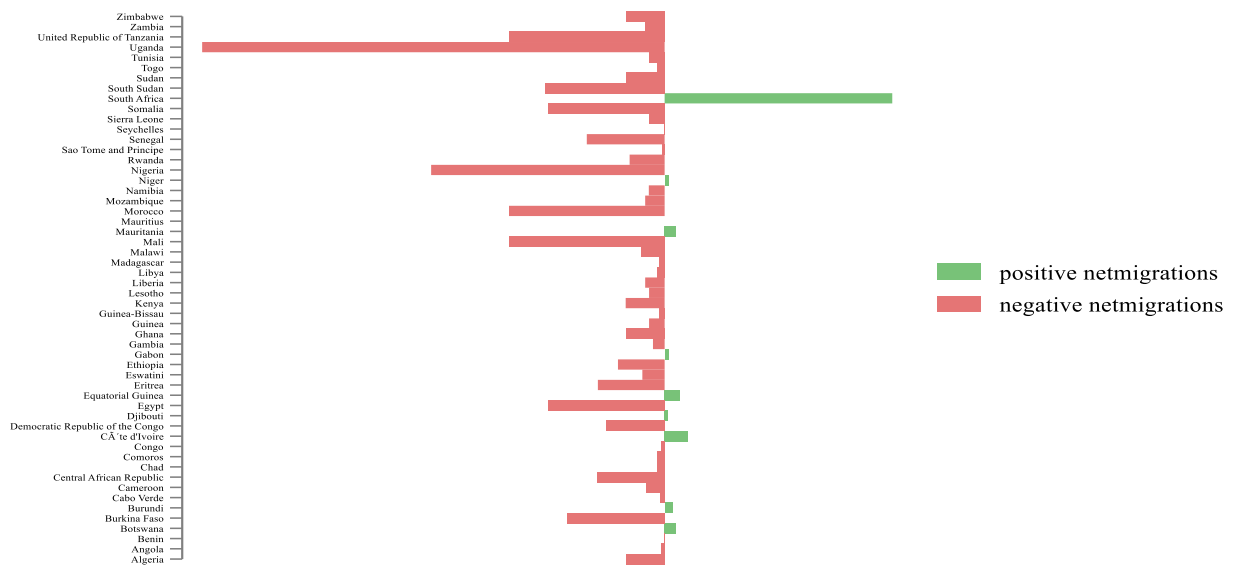
Figure 3.1

Howbeit, it should be noted that countries differ in Africa in their records of net migrations. Some record positive net migration while others have negative net migration. The deviating bar chart (figure 3.2) shows the net migrations of African countries in 2022. Countries with relatively better or positive net migration (0 to 58.50) are in blue with bars facing the right. The pink bars depict the negative net migrations (-0.2 to -118.85) in figure x below.

Uganda has the highest negative net migration for the year 2022, followed by Nigeria. While there were bare number of countries on the continent with positive net migration as at 2022, South Africa stands out in that category. Could the difference between Uganda and South Africa be level of economic development? The simple answer according to the World Bank data is yes. While Uganda is ranked low-income economy, South Africa is ranked upper-middle income economy. Could this same economic factor be responsible for the difference in their levels of human trafficking? If yes, what is the gender implication of economic factor on human trafficking on the continent?

Africa's Net Migrations (2022)

Source: UN DESA(2022)
Figure 3.2



4.0 Africa’s Human Trafficking by Income Levels

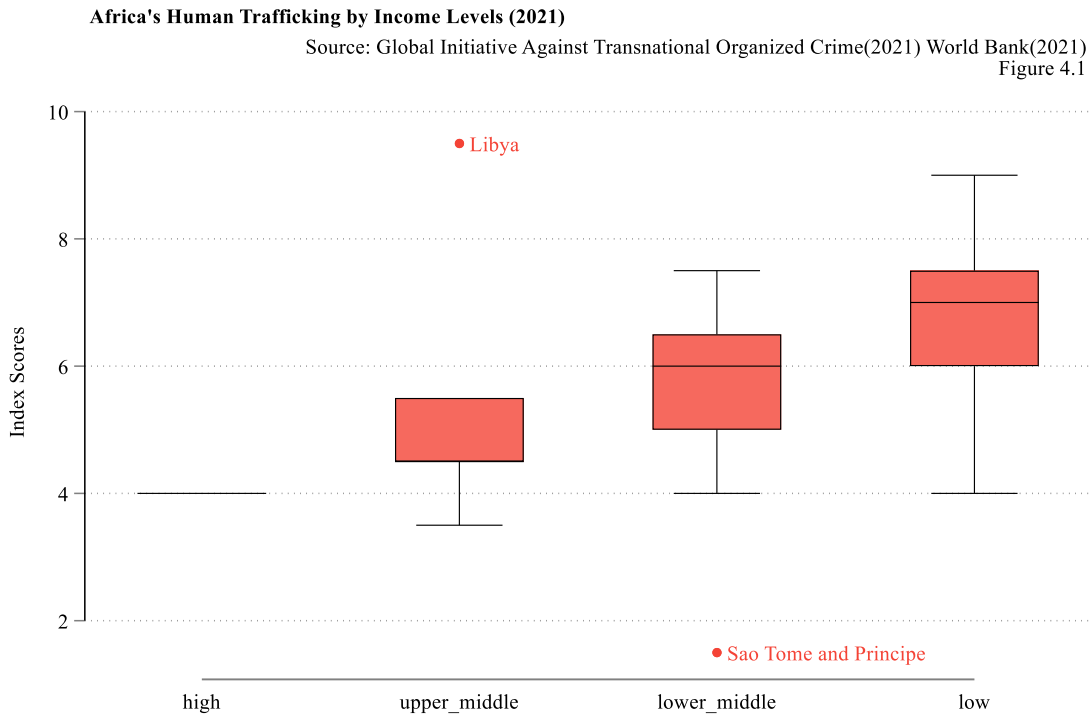
Having understood the state of migration on the continent, with outflow overshadowing inflow, a possible loophole or problem this comes with is an opportunity for trafficking. 78 percent of our respondents are willing to leave their countries, and 15 percent are contemplating leaving. With high negative migrations recorded, high willingness to leave and high level of poverty, there is a vacuum for human traffickers to perch on.

Using the Atlas GNI (gross national income) per capita or World Bank’s classification of world economies (2021), African countries are classified into four categories: high income (>12,695), upper-middle income (4,096 – 12,695), lower-middle income (1,046 – 4,095) and low income (<1,045). Twenty-four African countries ranked low income, 22 ranked lower-middle income, 7 ranked upper-middle income and 1 ranked high income.

Hence, to draw a correlation between economic development and human trafficking in Africa, figure 4.1 below shows the distribution of the available data for 2021. There is a correlation between income level and human trafficking or transnational organized crime index. Noticeably, the lower the income level the higher the median and the upper quartile. Nonetheless, attention should be paid to the extreme cases of Libya and Sao Tome and Principe, where the former deviates negatively and the latter positively. Libya is one of those countries in Africa bordering Europe and the only one ranked upper-middle income. The nature of its

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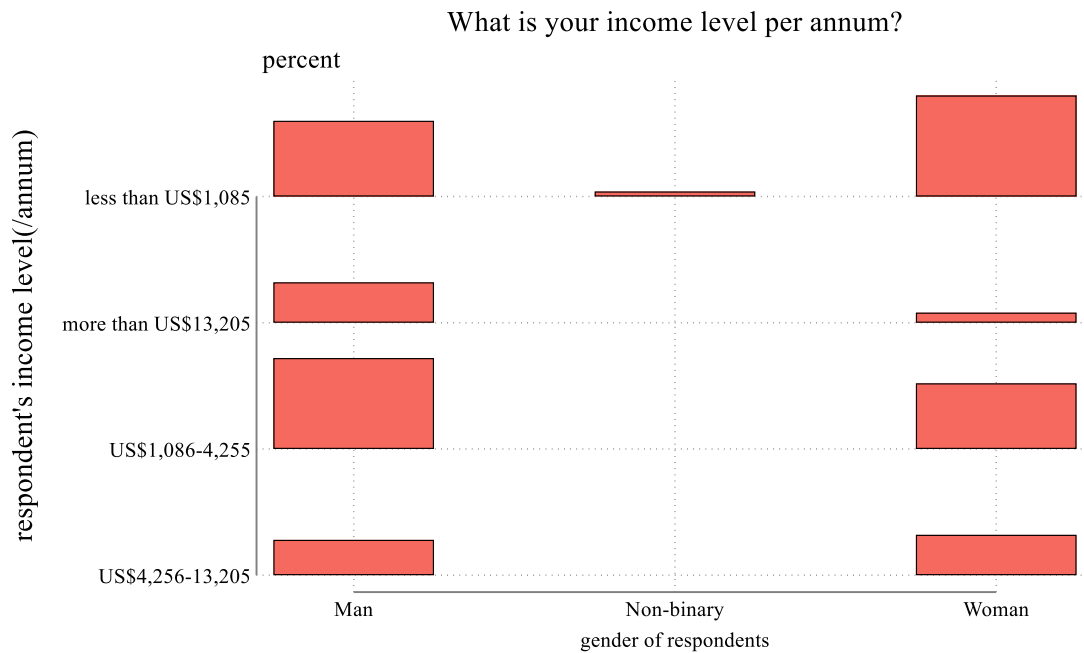
border and its current political climate post-Gadhafi make it extreme case in the upper-middle income class. However, further research could reveal more causal variables.



5.0 Analysis of Survey Results

In order to have knowledge of what is obtainable on the ground after the desktop research of AGTRC, a survey extending to every region of Africa was conducted. Since gender implications of economic migration and human trafficking in Africa is our priority, we focused on the gender distribution of our respondents. Fifty-one percent of our respondents were men, 48 percent were women and one percent non-binary. Having asked our respondents if they were willing to leave their countries to settle elsewhere with 78 percent responding yes and 15 percent contemplating to leave, we asked them the reason for wanting to leave and settle elsewhere. With options for climate disaster, socio-political persecution, religious persecution and sexual-orientation persecution, 99 percent of our respondents wanted to leave their countries to settle elsewhere for better economic opportunities.

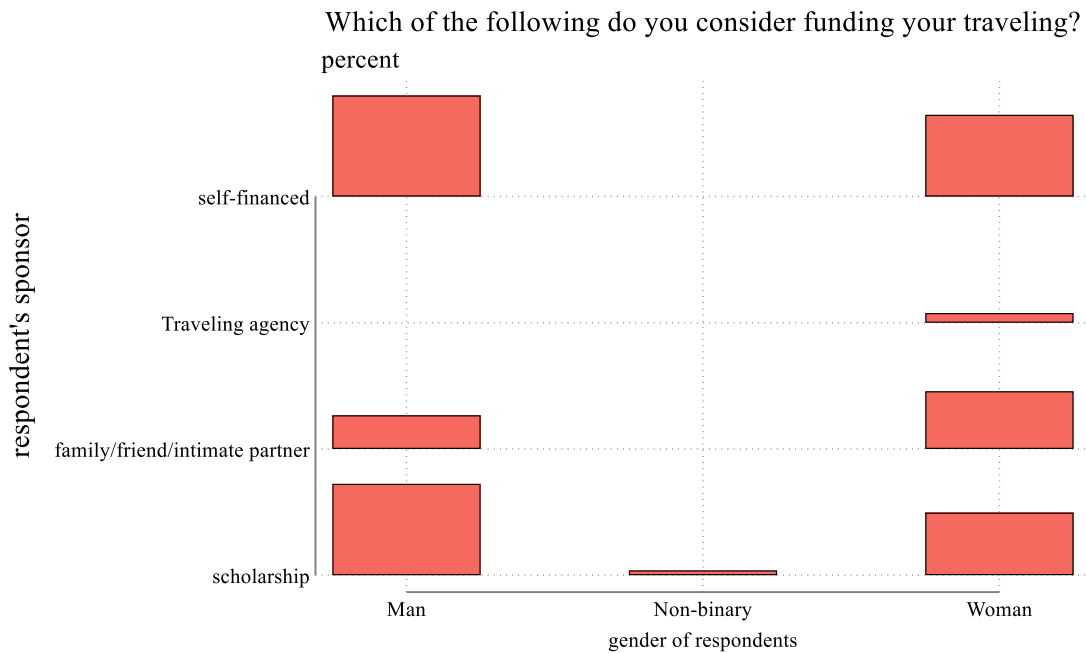
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Source: AGTRC Survey
Figure 5.1

Given this high tendency of Africans willing to emigrate their countries, we turned to their financial capacity to achieve this. Using the Atlas GNI per capita (2022) classification of income levels, figure 5.1 above accounts for the income level of our respondents per annum. What is quite informing about the chart at a glance is that women and non-binary people in Africa have low-income level per annum compared to men. This makes women, girls and non-binary people more susceptible relative to men. To corroborate this, according to the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (2022), from 2002 to 2019 data collected on trafficked people around the world, there are more women and girls trafficked vis-à-vis men and boys. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that 76 percent of our respondents are classified as low and lower-middle income earners.

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Source: AGTRC Survey
Figure 5.2

As a result of the prevailing poverty on the continent, there is an obvious incapacity to leave and settle elsewhere as desired by many. Hence, we asked our respondents who would likely sponsor their traveling (see figure 5.2). Women are more reliant on families, friends, intimate partners and traveling agencies than men are.

Lending credence to our survey results is the data by the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (2022); the data shows that people trafficked are often recruited by acquaintances and loved ones alike. Men and boys are more likely to be recruited by their friends and acquaintances. On the contrary, women and girls are more likely to be recruited by their intimate partners (see figure 5.3).

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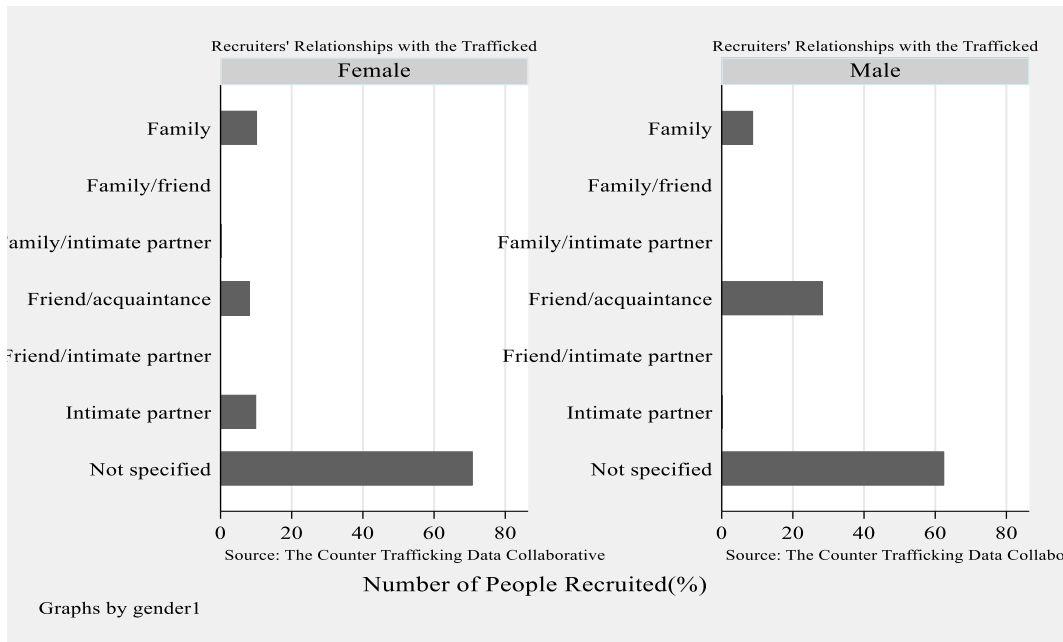
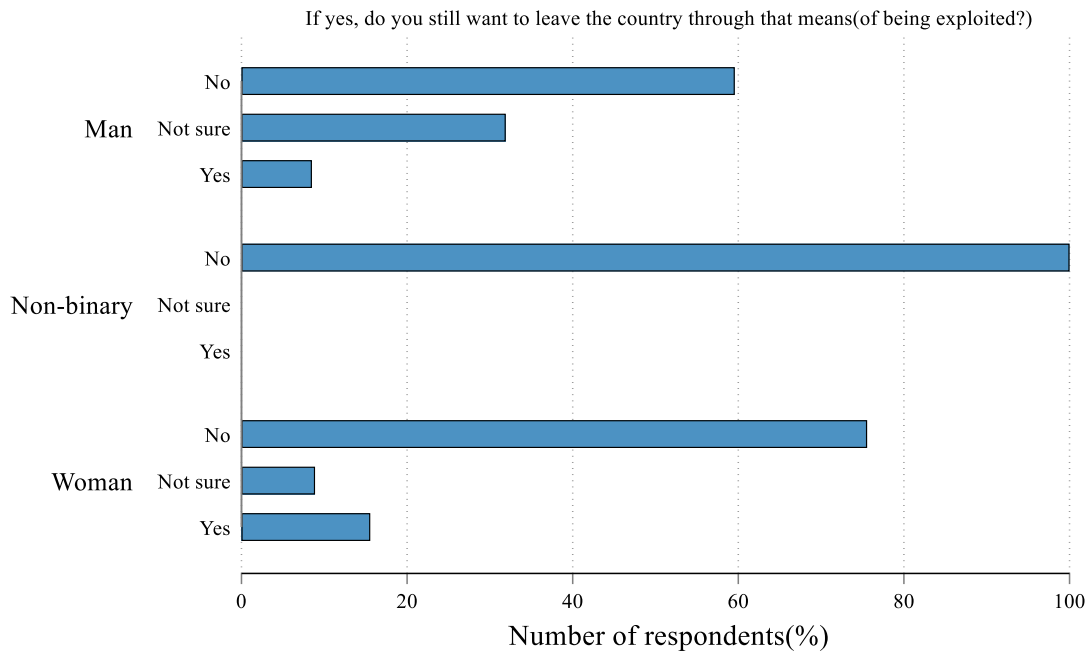


Figure 5.3

Hence, given our focus on trafficking, we asked our respondents if they suspected any exploitation by their potential traveling sponsors. Forty-two percent of our respondents responded yes or not sure. However, what is surprising is when asked if they still wanted to leave their countries through these suspicious means, 72 percent of our respondents responded yes or still contemplating it. Whilst the women respondents slightly responded yes than men, more men weighed their options of leaving through these suspicious sponsors (see figure 5.4).

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Source: AGTRC Survey
Figure 5.4

Hence, we turned to the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (2022) to have a gender-disaggregated view of human trafficking around the world. It must be admitted that these kind of data are difficult to collect and the available ones make sense for analysis on a world scale. From 2002 to 2019, available data on people trafficked show women and girls are more likely to be subject to sexual exploitation than forced labour. Conversely, men and boys are more likely to be subject to forced labour than sexual exploitation as shown in figure 5.5 below.

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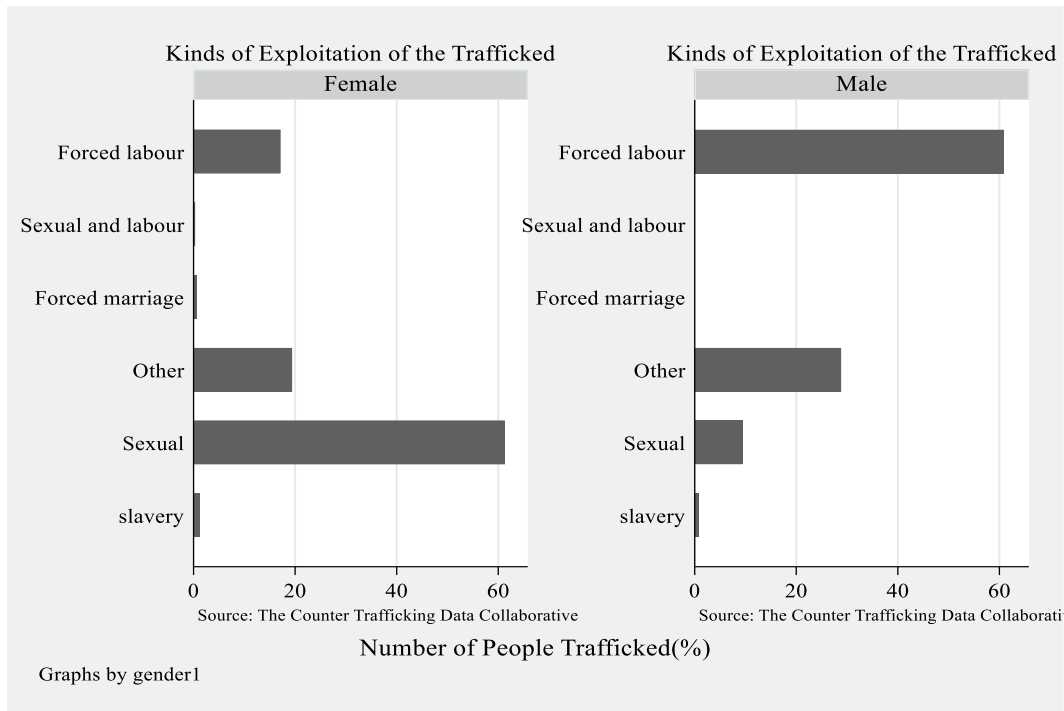
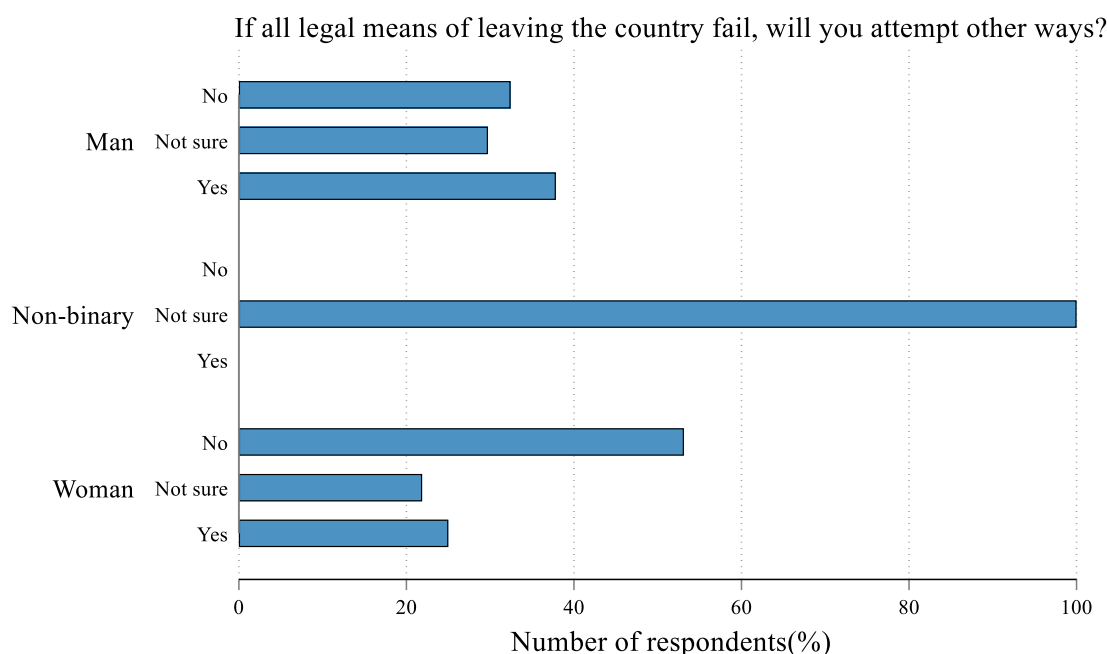


Figure 5.5

Knowing that it is a common knowledge that people who subject themselves to irregular migration on the continent are highly likely to be trafficked, we asked our respondents if they were willing to go through irregular routes peradventure all their legal means failed. Thirty-two percent of our respondents are either contemplating it or affirmatively responding yes. Given the gender distribution of our data, African men are more willing to embark on irregular migration relative to women.

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Source: AGTRC Survey
Figure 5.6

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a correlation between economic migration and human trafficking in Africa. As the second ranked continent on the global organized crime index, Africans trafficked in persons are very likely to be victims of economic despondency first before being victims of human trafficking. In logical sequence, desperation for better economic opportunities leads to desperation for migration by any means, which eventually creates opportunities for human traffickers and trafficking in persons. The survey conducted reveals a sort of dream by Africans in search for better life, with many of them desiring to leave the African shores. Perhaps, success stories on social media of some migrants, sending remittances home make it a source of inspiration for people to migrate. Similarly, the social media have given traffickers the platforms to lure intending migrants to fall victims of their tricks.

This brief concludes from the survey conducted that economic reason is a compelling driver of today's irregular migration, which reinforces human trafficking. Of course, other factors can reinforce human trafficking, but it mostly thrives on the desperation of potential migrants migrating for greener pasture. This submission resonates with the results of the survey conducted where the majority of the respondents, despite their awareness of the danger of migrating through the irregular routes, or being suspicious of exploitation by travel sponsors, are still resolute to move.

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A major import identified to be key to the correlation between economic migration and human trafficking in Africa is the net migration. The brief understands that African states with negative net migration usually experience more citizens willing to migrants and prone to being victims of human trafficking than countries with better positive net migration.

Importantly, the brief finds that women and girls are worse off economically compared to men and boys on the continent. This factor makes women and girls more susceptible to trafficking, despite more willingness by men to want to embark on illegal migration or subject themselves to exploitation by their travel sponsors.

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