**TVET: A SECOND CHANCE FOR FEMALE RETURNEE MIGRANTS IN NIGERIA**

**ABSTRACT**

Human trafficking remains a pressing issue globally, with Nigeria serving as a source, transit, and destination country. In response to this crisis, the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), in collaboration with local partners and international organizations such as the International Organization for Migration, has implemented various initiatives, including technical and vocational education and training (TVET) programmes. This research article examines the effectiveness of the ETAHT TVET programme in providing a second chance for female returnee migrants in Nigeria. Through qualitative analysis, including in-depth interviews and case studies, the study evaluates the impact of the programme on participants' lives, socio-economic reintegration, and empowerment. Findings suggest that the ETAHT TVET programme plays a significant role in empowering female returnees, fostering self-reliance, and reducing the risk of re-trafficking. The article concludes with recommendations for enhancing the programme's effectiveness and scalability.

**Keywords:** Edo State, human trafficking, TVET programme, female returnee migrants, empowerment, socio-economic reintegration

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Human trafficking remains a grave violation of human rights and a significant global challenge, affecting millions of individuals worldwide. Nigeria, particularly Edo State, is a hotspot for human trafficking, with thousands of women and girls falling victim to exploitation each year. According to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Edo State had the highest number of trafficked girls in 2017 (see Punch, 2023). With the promise of a better future, young girls are lured by traffickers and transported through the sub-Saharan deserts of Libya to the 'sea of death' Mediterranean Sea on boats en route to European countries, particularly Italy (Olubukola, 2020). Often, those who eventually reached Italy were forced into prostitution and slavery (Robert, 2017; ANSA: Infomigrants, 2021). This is because their passports and other travel documents were confiscated by the traffickers (Ibid.). Furthermore, on transit and destination points, these women were sexually (raped, molested), emotionally, physically, and mentally abused; personal belongings were stolen; and some were even killed (VOA, 08/08/2017; The Cable, 30/12/2018; Adeyinka et. al., 2023).

Recognizing the urgent need to combat this menace, the Edo State Government established the Edo State Task Force Against Human Trafficking (ETAHT), which has implemented various interventions to address the issue. One such initiative is the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programme, designed to provide a second chance for female returnee migrants by equipping them with valuable skills and resources for socioeconomic reintegration (Anonymous reference et. al., 3).

Although confronted with several challenges, the ETAHT TVET programme is waxing stronger as a flagship initiative aimed at empowering female returnee migrants through skills acquisition, entrepreneurship training, and psychosocial support. With the collaboration of local partners and international organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Nigeria, ETAHT offers a range of vocational courses tailored to the needs and interests of participants (Anonymous reference, 3). These courses include but are not limited to tailoring, catering, welding, agribusiness, hairdressing, cosmetology, and computer literacy (Ibid.).

**1.1 Background of The Study**

Edo State, located in southern Nigeria, has gained notoriety as a major source point for human trafficking. Economic hardship, coupled with deceptive recruitment tactics, pushes many young women and girls into the hands of traffickers, who exploit them for forced labour, sexual exploitation, and other forms of abuse (Adepitan, 2020; Agwu et. al., 2023; Adeyinka et. al., 2023). The repatriation of Nigerian migrants, particularly women, from various destination countries underscores the magnitude of the issue and the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address the root causes and support survivors.

According to the Pew Research Centre (2018), these repatriated victims form the nucleus of female returnee migrants, and unfortunately, the reintegration of these female returnee migrants has proven to be a difficulty for impacted nations. According to Adavbiele (2014), most African countries, Nigeria included, are confronted with returnee migrants' problems, with little to no contingency plans to address the situation.

**1.2 Problem Statement:**

The issue of reintegrating repatriated female victims of human trafficking is quite challenging; this is because their integration can be categorized into social and economic reintegration. From an economic viewpoint, it is imperative to understand that the majority of these female trafficked returnees embarked on their migration journey to become economically independent (Infomigrants, 2022). Furthermore, these trafficked victims were subjected to all forms of exploitation, abuse, and torture (Adeyinka et. al., 2023); hence, they require counseling and rehabilitation to be socially integrated into society.

It is a challenging task to achieve socioeconomic reintegration for these female returnees, especially as most of these young women who return lack the proper education, or skills that will enable them to acquire good jobs (Pennington & Balaram, 2013; Bisong, 2022). Further compounding the challenge is the high unemployment rate in Nigeria (National Bureau of Statistics, NBS, 2018, 2021).

Hence, when they return to Nigeria, these female returnee migrants are faced with unemployment due to their low education level and lack of competent skills to secure a job (Ogwo & Ezekoye, 2020). According to a recent study by Sydney and IDMC (2021), Nigeria’s rising unemployment is a problem that causes financial difficulties, thus becoming "the most crucial challenge experienced by returning migrants in Nigeria."

Therefore, to explore female-inclusive economic empowerment avenues that give repatriated trafficked women or girls a second chance at gaining economic independence, this paper poses the following question: What are the tools that will enable these female returnees to be involved in economic activities?

**1.3** **Research Objective:**

1. To determine the tools that will facilitate female returnees to be engaged in economic activities.

**2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

TVET provides trainees with opportunities to acquire skill knowledge; thus, it involves the development of innovative new skills, and the practice of approaches to implementing skills and knowledge acquired during the training process (Speelman, 2005; UNESCO, 2021). Furthermore, Donjor (2011) asserts that TVET is a process and technique that enhances and releases the human capability, required for productive contribution toward persons’ and nations’ socioeconomic development (Pavlova, 2014; Paryono, 2017). In addition, TVET is a recognized pathway for economic self-sustenance (Anonymous reference, 0).

The term TVET places a strong emphasis on developing trainees' hands-on skills and practical knowledge to prepare them for employment or self-employment. According to Ogundowolo (1998, cited in Idoko, 2014; anonymous reference et. al., 1). The idea behind TVET is to ensure value reorientation amongst individuals or groups and transform them into wealth and employment creators (Ibid.).

Furthermore, writers view TVET as the panacea for eradicating poverty and an unemployment reduction strategy, as the acquisition of TVET creates employment/self-employment (entrepreneurship) and wealth creation, thus facilitating individuals’ self-reliance and self-sufficiency (Isaac, 2011; cited in Ikegwu et al., 2014). A large percentage of this study’s participants opine that TVET played a key part in their current entrepreneurial status, as they consider themselves to have attained “self-sufficiency” and “self-reliance,” through TVET. This assertion is a reaffirmation of Ogundele et al. (2012), who posit that TVET is an economic empowerment approach that promotes the improvement of human and community socioeconomic development (Anonymous reference et al., 2).

Drawing knowledge from writers' postulations and data collected from research participants; this study argues that TVET is the process that provides individuals or groups (female returnee migrants) with technical and/or vocational knowledge for later productive private (personal) or commercial usage.

According to a study published by JPK Malaysia (2022), [the marketability of TVET skills graduates is higher compared to university graduates](https://jpkmalaysia.com/tvet-graduates-employability-on-the-rise/). Nevertheless, in most developing countries, especially Nigeria, TVET is faced with several challenges, including educational recognition challenges. Over time TVET has been relegated to the background of our educational system – this is manifested in our modern education system that puts more emphasis on theoretical knowledge than practical, which is how technical and vocational skills are acquired (Adavbiele, 2014). The relegation of TVET has led to a lack of knowledge on the significance of developing TVET.

The relegation of TVET is due to the perception that it is a “second-class” option for “school dropouts” or people with low academic abilities, hence unable to pursue “conventional education” (Yusoff, et. al., 2020). This perception is considered stigmatization that may affect the reputation and recognition of TVET programmes, thus discouraging participants (Ibid.).

Inadequate funding is another challenge confronting the implementation of an ideal TVET programme. This is because establishing and maintaining a comprehensive TVET programme requires significant financial investment and resources, needed to procure infrastructure, equipment, and qualified instructors (TVET Journal, 2016). According to Akinola et. al. (2020), limitations in the availability of funding and resources hinder the delivery of high-quality TVET.

**2.1 Theoretical Frameworks**

Several theories explain skill acquisition, particularly about TVET as a pathway to economic empowerment and an approach to boosting entrepreneurship. This research explores the following skill acquisition theories:

**2.1.1 Dekeyser Skill Acquisition Theory**

The scientific roots of Skill Acquisition Theory can be found in different branches of psychology, which range from behaviorism to cognitivism and connectionism (Dekeyser and Criado, 2013). The basic claim of Skill Acquisition Theory, according to Dekeyser (2007),

*"Is that the learning of a wide variety of skills shows a remarkable similarity in development from initial representation of knowledge through initial changes in behavior to eventual fluent, spontaneous, largely effortless, and highly skilled behavior, and that this set of phenomena can be accounted for by a set of basic principles common to acquisition of all skills" (p. 97).*

**2.1.2 Dreyfus Model of Skill Acquisition**

Dreyfus's Model of Skill Acquisition postulates that skill acquisition is a progression of skills and knowledge acquisition from novice to expert stages (Dreyfus, 2004). Dreyfus listed the following stages; novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert, as essential stages an individual needs to pass through before he/she can be certified to have acquired technical and vocational skills (Ibid.).

**2.1.3 Keiffer's Theory of Empowerment**

Keiffer's Theory of Empowerment explains that for an individual to be empowered, he/she has to pass through a developmental process or stage (Keiffer, 1984). He stressed that this stage encompasses skill and knowledge acquisition, crucial for the attainment of empowerment.

Although these theories have been useful to several research projects, including this particular study, this paper noted the lack of sustainability components in existing TVET-related theories. This study argues that contemporary TVET theory should go beyond skill acquisition by exploring approaches to improve and ensure the sustainability of TVET outcomes, such as empowerment and the entrepreneurship status of participants and graduates.

Anonymous et. al. (3) postulated a comprehensive contemporary theoretical framework that addressed the issue of empowerment/entrepreneurship sustainability. They reiterated that to attain sustainable entrepreneurship through TVET, stakeholders need to ensure the establishment and efficient operation of TVET programmes (see Figure 2.1).

**TVET-ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL**

**Distal Outcome**

* Reduce Crime
* Increased Entrepreneurship Goals
* Improved Economic Well-being

**Returnee Migrants**

**Proximal Outcome**

* Self-competencies
* Self-efficacy
* Self-esteem

**Sufficient Funding**

* Start-up
* Business growth

**TVET Programmes (ETAHT)**

**Sustainable Entrepreneurship**

* Monitoring TVET graduates' progress level
* Facilitate skill refresher programmes and updates
* Provide business promotion advice and relevant marketing tips

**Figure 2.1:** TVET Entrepreneurship Model

(Anonymous et. al., 3)

The TVET-Entrepreneurship Model is a product of data gathered from research participants in a recent study, where the majority of research participants opined that for them to attain sustainable entrepreneurship status, they experienced or passed through all the stages listed in Anonymous’s TVET-Entrepreneurship Model (Ibid.).

**3. METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative approach to assess the effectiveness of the ETAHT TVET programme in providing a second chance for female returnee migrants. Semi-structured interviews and case studies are conducted with programme participants (graduates) to gather insights into their experiences, challenges, and achievements following their engagement with the programme. Additionally, key stakeholders, including programme coordinators, trainers, and government officials, are interviewed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the programme's implementation and impact.

As mentioned above, this research used interviews as its main data-gathering technique. According to Nicholls (2011), the interview technique is a key component of the qualitative research method, that allows interactive engagement and social dialogue between the researcher and the research participants, thus, helping the researcher gain a detailed understanding (Cheung et al., 2016). Anonymous et al. 2, reaffirm the above assertion, noting that in providing a humanistic, sociable interactive engagement and dialogue, qualitative research becomes a peculiar and most suitable method in most social sciences and humanities-related studies.It is pertinent to also note that the qualitative research approach is an essential method used by researchers to gather first-hand raw data, which boosts research originality (Sapsford and Jupp, 2006).

Secondary data plays a pivotal role in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to gain access to previous relevant study-related documents (Boslaugh, 2007). This research used secondary data to gather relevant statistics and publications on the subject matter. The use of secondary data helped in correlating, corroborating, and discussing the gathered primary data; thus enhancing the research analysis.

This research used non-probability and snowball sampling techniques to source research participants that possessed the research population criteria. This technique was used to gather data from 30 participants: 25 personal interviews and 5 focus group discussion (FGD) members.

The reasons for using non-probability and snowball sampling approaches were that there were no centralized recorded documents of Edo State's TVET graduates, hence the inaccuracy in the number of female TVET graduates in Edo State. Also, Ovia South-West and Benin City in Edo State were the study areas; hence, to seamlessly source data in these two locations, a chain-linked connection of participants was more suitable, thus the usage of the snowball sampling technique, which provides the researcher with the chain-link connection opportunity.

As mentioned earlier, this research sample size was 30 participants, non-randomly selected from the target population, with characteristics as follows: female returnee migrants (from Libya) in Edo State who have graduated from the ETAHT TVET programmes and worked with skills acquired for over one year before the date of interview.

Historically, Edo State has been referred to as the Benin Kingdom, with the majority of the population being of the Bini ethnicity; nevertheless, this research is cognizant of the significance of an inclusive ethnicity study, hence incorporates participants from different ethnic groups (i.e., Yoruba and Igbo tribes). Ethnicity inclusiveness enhances further understanding from different perspectives, as participants from different ethnicities submit their viewpoints, which might have some ethnic undertone. The importance of including ethnicity or gender in social sciences and humanities studies cannot be overemphasized, as it facilitates a greater understanding of a research study (Fraser, 2018; Van van Heijden et al., 2019). This study postulates that to gain a comprehensive understanding, the inclusion of key variables such as demographics, gender, and ethnicity is important in social sciences and humanities research.

This study understands the importance of the youth population in nation-building and recognizes that when productively engaged, the youth population is capable of boosting a nation's development (Uzochukwu, 2015). Agwi, et. al. (2018), further assert that youths who are productively engaged in enterprising activities boost a country's national growth (Diandra and Azmy, 2020). With the above understanding, 96.66 percent of this research participants were between 21 and 30 years old, while 33.33 percent were 31 to 40 years old. According to the National Youth Policy (2009), these age brackets are considered youth in Nigeria.

After collecting data from 30 participants, this research reached a point of saturation when the researcher noticed answers repeated by potential respondents, hence discontinuing data collection. Based on the data gathered the researcher recommends a sample size of 20 to 30 research participants for researchers planning to use an in-depth interview approach in the qualitative method, as this sample size threshold is considered sufficient enough to answer research questions that address outlined study objectives. According to a study, 20 to 40 in-depth interviews are sample sizes of 20 to 40 interviews are sufficient to reach meta-themes data saturation, especially when conducting qualitative study (Hagaman and Wutich, 2017).

In furtherance, Zukauskas et al., (2018) stress that to conduct quality research, researchers are urged it is critical to follow and apply standard research principles and ethics. With this understanding, this study, abided by all the ethics such as informed consent, confidentiality, and more.

The researcher is not from Edo State; thus, he is considered an outsider. Being an outsider, on the other hand, did not deter the researcher from conducting successful research, rather, it portrays the researcher as an unbiased judge, consequently boosting the neutrality and authenticity of the research. As an outsider, the researcher is seen as a neutral entity, who strives to maintain impartiality, a key element in research principles and ethics (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Fleming, 2018). On the other hand, the researcher is considered an insider, as he is a Nigerian, who knows the research subject. In addition, this study researcher is familiar with Nigeria's economic suffering and rising unemployment, as well as several government and non-governmental organization activities aimed at addressing these issues; hence, the researcher has insider information. Nevertheless, as an insider, the researcher abided by all the guiding principles and ethics of research study, thus facilitating reliable data analysis. Researcher's neutrality is assessed in their research, hence, abiding by relevant research principles and ethics is essential.

This research applied a high degree of confidentiality as it did not disclose participants' personal information, such as names and addresses; consequently, research participants, cannot be traced, as aliases were used to analyse collected data – making research participants' unidentifiable; as a result, each participant in the study remains anonymous. In the data analysis chapter, the researcher then assigns coded aliases to the research participants (such as R1, R2, FGD1, FGD2, FGD3, and so on). This research applied confidentiality ethics to hide participants' identities, hence shielding participants from potential study-related harassment. As rightly pointed out by Dooly et al. (2017), confidentiality is an essential component in research, because it provides participants identifies protection, thus preventing possible harassment.

In furtherance, this research recognizes the importance of informed consent ethics, hence, the researcher is fully cognizant of the ethical standards for informed consent, thus, he applied for and received a consent letter from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak. The researcher handed and or read the consent letter to the study participants. This approach was adopted to educate participants on the research's objective and get their agreement before the start of the interview. In the work of Nijhawan et al. (2013) this aforementioned method is vital in research studies and to investigators, with the latter requiring study participants to sign a confirmatory signature affirming voluntary involvement. As an essential element in scientific research, this research investigator complied with the informed consent principle and ethics. The signing of informed consent by the research participants is viewed as an approval stamp that validates the data collected and this study.

Due to the sampling technique, this research encountered limitations, and in the maintenance of research transparency ethics, these findings cannot be used to generalize the entirety of the Edo State population. Furthermore, the non-probability and snowball participants' selection methods did not provide equal selection to the target population in both Ovia South-West and Benin City in Edo State. Atieno (2009) asserts that the snowball technique is an approach that limits potential participants' equal chances of being selected for an interview and also hinders the possibility of generalizing research findings (Allen, 2017). With knowledge of the aforementioned and the importance of complying with research transparency ethics, this research believes that the findings of this paper cannot be used to generalize this study's target population.

**4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

These research findings suggest that the ETAHT TVET programme has had a transformative effect on the lives of female returnee migrants. Participants report increased socioeconomic status, confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of agency as a result of acquiring new skills and knowledge. Many express gratitude for the opportunity to rebuild their lives and pursue meaningful livelihoods. Additionally, the programme has facilitated social integration and community support networks, further enhancing participants' reintegration prospects.

According to data from the majority of the research participants, ETAHT plays a significant role in boosting their economic empowerment. It is imperative to state that the female returnee migrants experienced economic hardship when they arrived back in Nigeria, as they were limited by financial support from their family and community members. However, the hardship was for a while, following the intervention of the Edo State government, the ETAHT TVET programme was established, which allowed interested returnee migrants to enroll in the TVET programme of their choice. Although during the processes of skill acquisition at the ETAHT TVET programme, most of these female returnee migrants complained of a lack of funds to maintain themselves (daily feeding, and transportation) while undergoing the 3-month ETAHT TVET.

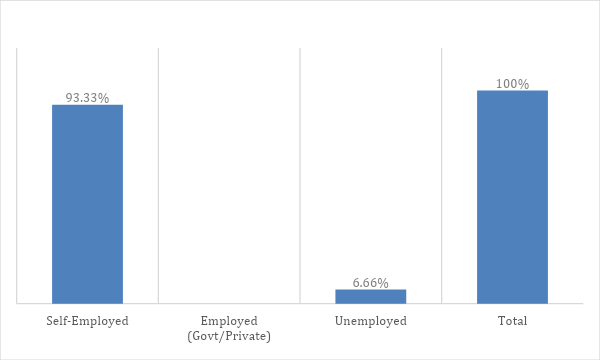
However, after graduating from the TVET, they were satisfied with the TVET processes, as the majority of them acquired the following skills from the ETAHT TVET programmes;

1. Cosmetology
2. Welding
3. Plaster of Paris (POP) ceiling
4. Agro-farm

## Catering services

It is pertinent to note that IOM categorized these skills as “*business skills*.” According to Ki3, “*all these skills are being acquired for commercial purposes*,” hence the term “*business skills*.” IOM stressed that it is more involved in the business skill model of TVET programmes, which is simply providing financial assistance as a start-up to TVET programmes graduates. This is indicative of their (IOM) financial support of the businesses of returnee migrants who have been trained and graduated from the ETAHT programmes.

The establishment of skill acquisition (TVET) programmes, "*seen as a panacea of economic development*" (UNESCO, 2021), is necessitated by the need to empower individuals with technical and vocational know-how (Anonymous reference et al., 1; 2), geared toward addressing the economic challenges, particularly the rise in unemployment in developing countries like Nigeria, where unemployment is on the rise.



**Figure 4.1:** Employment Status.

Source: Section A: Question No. 8.

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, the ETAHT TVET programmes had substantial economic impacts on female returnee migrants, as over 90 percent of this study’s respondents noted that through ETAHT programmes, they became business owners, which boosted their economic status. Furthermore, the economic impact of ETAHT TVET programmes on returnee migrants, significantly reduced unemployment, especially among female returnee migrants in Edo State.

The ETAHT TVET programme helped boost the economic status of these female returnee migrants. For instance, R20, a married female research participant with a child, opined that being married has made her a family financial contributor, especially in her case where her husband earns a meagre salary. According to R20, "*I am married, and my husband receives* a *little salary from his work, so I support the family from my business profit.*" While she opined that the ETAHT TVET helped in the improvement of her economic status, she, however, stressed that more financial assistance is required.

“*I need more financial support to grow my business, as my business grows, that means I will make more profits, and with more profit, I will be financially okay to support my family and community*.”

In a sense, TVET significantly boosted female returnee migrant’s economic situation.

Although, poor funding of skill acquisition programmes had a direct or indirect effect on all research participants; with some complaining of a lack of financial support to take care of their transportation and feeding during the skill training period. Few of the research participants went further, complaining that aside from transportation and feeding, bureaucratic bottlenecks play a significant role in the limitations or lack of resources needed for a skill acquisition centre to function effectively. R11, cited in Anonymous reference et al. 3,

*"I learned many things from ETAHT skill programmes, and these things I learned have had great impacts on my daily living, nevertheless, I would like to suggest that ETAHT and IOM provide enough funding during and after the training, not forgetting to make available modern production chemicals and equipment; these are very important for proper skill acquisition."*

The ‘*proper arrangement to financially support trainees'* and the insufficient ‘*equipment and chemicals needed for training’* opinion by R11 were echoed in the work of Aina (2009), which notes that most skill acquisition programmes in Nigeria are considered incomprehensive and ineffective due to a lack of resources, occasioned by outright corruption through fund embezzlement, which has led to poor funding of government-partnered schemes like TVET programmes. Another work by Oshionebo (2017) pointed out that financial mismanagement and corruption are the key issues affecting human development and capacity-building projects like TVET programmes. He further noted that these challenges lead to inefficiency in many government-initiated projects, such as TVET programmes.

Regardless of the above challenges, ETAHT TVET programmes had significant impacts on female returnee migrants in Edo State. The majority of this study’s participants are satisfied with the TVET programmes organized by ETAHT and IOM. These research participants were glad to have acquired different skills (perfume, cream and soap making, tailoring, welding, POP, business skill training, etc.), which, according to them, have greatly impacted their current daily lives through the use of skills acquired for commercial purposes. Most of the research participants stated that due to the skills they acquired, they have become wealth creators and, thus, are currently economically self-sustaining, and maintaining improved living conditions.

The viewpoints of the research participants are supported by the work of Okolie & Asfa, who noted that TVET provides a wealth creation opportunity (2017). Furthermore, supporting the positive economic impact of skill acquisition on returnee migrants, Idoko (2014) rightly stated that the acquisition of technical and vocational skills creates in individuals the opportunity to become economically self-sufficient.

In addition, skill acquisition programmes by ETAHT and IOM facilitated the self-employment (entrepreneurial) status of eighteen (18) research participants; with some employing staff to work with them. “A *lot of returnees have benefited from the empowerment programmes (ETAHT TVET), including myself—it made me a business owner with workers,"* says R8, a self-employed cosmetologist. Therefore, this research posits that the ETAHT skill acquisition (TVET) programmes, created entrepreneurship status in returnee migrants while also creating employment opportunities for other members of the public who are now employed in returnee migrants-owned businesses. This confirms the assertion by Donli (2004), who noted that knowledge acquired via TVET instills the entrepreneurial spirit an individual requires for economic development.

In furtherance, equipping female returnee migrants with skills, through ETAHT and IOM’s skill acquisition programmes is considered impactful for the returnee migrants. Quoting a smiling R7, *'The training has taken me to the next level—my life has improved.’* In addition, R8, 9, and 10 opined that they had satisfactory training, which greatly impacted their daily economic condition. R8: *‘I am satisfied with the training because I gained skills that are helping me feed and take care of myself,’* – R9 and 10 have similar opinions, as, according to them, the skill training they acquired has given them economic power, thus enabling them to earn a living and support themselves. R10 and R15 specifically mentioned that they are now financially responsible for their jobless-aged parents and general family support, respectively.

The aftermath of the ETAHT TVET ignited business craft success that made it possible for most of the research participants to be able to take care of themselves and their immediate family members, making most returnee migrants economically responsible in their communities. The majority of this study’s research participants believe that the ETAHT skill acquisition programmes enabled them to be economically self-reliant, and according to a few research participants, it has also made them economically responsible to people by paying their temporary or permanent workers and family members under their care while also paying government levied taxes on their business operations. In the words of R19, a female skilled perfume and soap maker (cosmetologist), '*I support (financially) my family, pay shop rent and government levies, and the nation benefits from it*.’ The submission by R19 is backed by Alhasan & Abdullahi (2013), who wrote that exposing returnee migrants to relevant skills helps boost their income generation and ensures an improved livelihood. Furthermore, and in correlation to R19, Nwankwo et al. (2013) note that skills acquisition (TVET) serves as a positive avenue to promote national development.

In addition, a focus group discussion (FGD) was held between the researcher and five skilled, self-employed single females, three (3) aged between 21 and 24 years old and two (2) aged between 25 and 30 years old. In a friendly atmosphere, a productive interaction ensued between the researcher and FGD members, with the five FGD members acknowledging that through ETAHT TVET and their start-up support, they have been able to flourish in business and also helped in the training of others who are interested. Asked if ETAHT TVET programmes have economically impacted their lives, FGD2 responded – “*yes, we are all economically self-reliant.”* FGD2’s response came with unanimous head nodes and smile gestures from the other FGD members.

All five FGD members consider themselves economically self-reliant, which they attributed to ETAHT TVET's skills and business acumen. It is pertinent to stress that all five FGD members run businesses, pay workers, government levies/taxes, and shop rentals, while also taking care of their immediate family's financial needs.

FGD5 mentioned that she was from a poverty-stricken family and would sometimes prostitute to earn a living and gather funds for her European migration mission which abruptly ended at her transit location (Libya) en route to Italy. FGD5’s confession of coming from a poverty-stricken family is common and considered an endemic in Nigeria, at least in the past few years. In 2017, the World Bank report asserts that over 85 million Nigerians live below the international poverty line of $1.90 per day. FGD5's confession confirms the World Bank 2017 report and in more recent studies by a renowned global real-time poverty data gathering NGO, World Poverty Clock, quoted in their report that *‘Nigeria now has more people living in extreme poverty than any other country in the world’* (2018); and about 50 percent (102, 407, 327) Nigerians currently live in extreme poverty (2020).

However, FGD5 expressed delight and acknowledged the economic impacts of the ETAHT TVET programme and her start-up has flourished her business acumen and current financial status. Quoting FGD5, “*Thanks to ETAHT TVET, I now run a successful business and I am very grateful*." Furthermore, and in the practicality of the effects of economic impacts of ETAHT TVET programmes; FGD5 pointed out that she can now afford certain things which she previously could not – quoting FGD5, *‘I can purchase what I want, even though if it is basic things but I am fine with that.’* FGD2 interrupted FGD5 with an accusation that ETAHT and IOM are favouring some returnee migrants (FGD5 inclusive) which is why some are more successful than others. This accusation led to an argument with FGD4 and 5 countering FGD2’s accusation that the ETAHT and IOM collaborative initiative was biased in its financial support to returnee migrants. However, FGD4 and 5 countered the narrative as false; FGD5 noted that the reason her business is very successful was due to her practical approaches and deep commitment to her business as to others who give little or no attention to their business. FDG5 also pointed out that, another reason for her business success is that since she graduated from the ETAHT TVET programme, although not regular, however, she has been in contact with the ETAHT TVET programmes trainers, to brush up on her TVET and business skills, to meet the modern-day demands.

In FGD5 words which were in Pidgin English (to make her point), the researcher will transcribe into the English language

*‘I hear wetin una dey talk, say dem (ETAHT and IOM) dey support me, na why my business dey boom – my sister, I dey hustle well and I no dey neglect any chance wey go help my business grow’ she continues ‘dem (ETAHT and IOM) go call for training and assessment and una go come but na una go still dey wonder why my business dey grow.’*

In English language translation, FGD5 explained that the accusation against her and other successful returnee migrants that benefited from skill acquisition programmes in Edo state was false, according to her, she is a hardworking lady that is passionate about her business – thus she always makes use of any slightest opportunity to enhance her business by regularly attending all training and assessments organized by ETAHT and IOM even after her graduation years ago, while most of the complainants do not show up regularly to refresher training and assessments. She wondered why they made such accusations when they were indirectly the cause of their current fate. FGD5 then proceeded by raising her eyebrows and swinging her head simultaneously, probably in disapproval of the accusation by FGD2.

The five FGD members thought that the ETAHT skill programmes had substantial positive socioeconomic impacts on their lives and their communities. With the benefits accrued from the programmes, they are fully disconnected from all forms of social vices and are also currently economically self-reliant, while providing financial support to their immediate family. While, FGD3 asserts that ETAHT TVET “*helped to economically improve people's live*s," noting personally that “*ETAHT TVET promoted my economic living situation*.” FGD1 notes that “*I am economically self-reliant*.”

The researcher asked a similar question (impacts of skill acquisition on returnee migrants in Edo State) to this study’s three (3) key informants from both government and non-governmental organization, to which they all opined that skill acquisition programmes in Edo state have had great positive socioeconomic impacts on the returnee migrant and also to the state in general. They noted that this is evident in the success testimonies of returnee migrants who have gone through the ETAHT skill programmes, and successfully established businesses based on their craft.

Key informant three (Ki3), a worker with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), stressed that to improve the socioeconomic condition of returnee migrants, IOM in collaboration with ETAHT has assisted returnee migrants through financial support to establish a skill-based business of their choice, after graduation from the ETAHT TVET programmes. Ki3 maintains that this is done to reintegrate returnee migrants. In verbatim, Ki3 asserts;

*‘IOM provides returnees migrants with appropriate business skills management (BST) – which has so far equipped returnee migrants with skills and knowledge required to prepare returnees for their reintegration, small business startup, and adequate management*

In continuation, Ki3 showed pictures of returnees who are now artisan entrepreneurs, stating thus, ‘*Here are* *testimonies of IOM-assisted business skill programmes beneficiaries in Edo State.*' Ki3 opines that IOM's business skill programmes in Edo state had a significant impact on returnee migrants, who are mostly now entrepreneurs and use skills acquired for productive economic gains and the improvement of their living conditions. Ki3's viewpoints re-echo the work of Alhasan and Abdullahi, who stressed that exposing returnees to TVET programmes paved ways that facilitates returnee migrants’ income generation, thus enhancing their economic living conditions (2013).

Furthermore, Ki2, who works with ETAHT confirmed ETAHT to be the main coordinator of skill acquisition programmes in Edo State, hence all related government and non-governmental organizations collaborate with ETAHT. Ki2 noted the rehabilitation, reintegration, and TVET programmes organized by ETAHT have significant impacts on returnees. In the words of Ki2 words, ‘ETAHT *programmes, have facilitated the rehabilitation, and training of returnee migrants in several TVET skills, and the majority of ETAHT TVET graduates are doing well in their chosen business crafts.*’ This viewpoint has the backing of Ki1, a worker with NCFRMI; Ki1 believes that the ETAHT TVET programmes positively impacted Edo State, returnee migrants. Ki1 noted that he was impressed with the *“very successful”* stories of the ETAHT TVET programmes, asserting that a few graduates of the ETAHT TVET programmes had positive testimonies. Ki1 stresses that;

*‘The ETAHT and IOM TVET programmes collaboration have recorded success, with the majority of ETAHT graduates (returnee migrants), now possessing the skill and knowledge to make their products for commercial purposes, and improving their level economic self-dependent.’*

The above quote by Ki1 reaffirms previous research which believes that the TVET programme is a platform that instills in individuals, an entrepreneurship spirit for economic independence (Donli, 2004). Ki1, further mentioned that being economically engaged has dissuaded most of the returnee migrants trained from going back or getting involved in criminal activities or other social vices – thus, potentially reducing the crime rate within their communities. The submission by Ki1 is in alignment with this research’s adapted theoretical framework – Keiffer’s theory. In the framework (see below), the goal of every TVET programme is to achieve Optimal Outcomes and Distal Outcomes. While Proximal Outcomes target the social well-being of individual participants, Distal Outcomes reduce individual participation in social vices (human trafficking) whilst, improving individuals and their community’s socio-economic conditions.

In summary, these research findings highlight the importance of holistic interventions that address the multifaceted needs of survivors of human trafficking. The ETAHT TVET programme exemplifies a comprehensive approach to reintegration, combining skills training with psychosocial support and entrepreneurship development. By equipping participants with practical skills and resources, the programme not only enhances their economic prospects but also reduces their vulnerability to re-trafficking and exploitation.

**5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the ETAHT TVET programme:

1. Strengthen collaboration with local partners and community-based organizations to expand the reach of the programme and ensure the provision of tailored support services.
2. Incorporate life skills training, including financial literacy and rights awareness, into the curriculum to empower participants and promote long-term resilience.
3. Foster linkages with employers and industry stakeholders to facilitate job placement and market access for programme graduates.
4. Conduct periodic evaluations and monitoring to assess the programme's impact and identify areas for improvement.

**6. CONCLUSION**

The ETAHT TVET programme represents a promising model for supporting the socio-economic reintegration of female returnee migrants in Nigeria. By providing participants with skills, knowledge, and support, the programme offers a second chance for survivors of human trafficking to rebuild their lives and pursue sustainable livelihoods. Continued investment in such initiatives is essential to addressing the root causes of trafficking, promoting human rights, and fostering inclusive development in Nigeria and beyond.

This study concludes that indeed ETAHT TVET programme provided a second chance for socioeconomic upliftment to female returnee migrants in Edo State. The ETAHT TVET programme had positive socioeconomic impacts, on female returnee migrants, as it facilitated and boosted their self-reliance and entrepreneurial status respectively. Although confronted with funding challenges, ETAHT skill acquisition programmes were lauded by all research participants, who pointed out that the agency and its operation, genuinely wanted the betterment of Edo State returnee migrants, particularly the female returnee migrants who had gone through horrendous sex-trafficking ordeals (prostitution, sex-trade, and sexual assaults) in their migration journey.

Overall, the impacts of ETAHT TVET programmes on Edo State’s female returnee migrants are vast; particularly in addressing human trafficking, unemployment, and poverty which are key factors necessitating illegal or irregular migration by Nigerians (Edo State indigenes) to European nations. Through the ETAHT TVET programme, participants were presented with a second chance that promotes their socioeconomic, thus reducing the chances of re-trafficking.

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