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Giving up your body to enter fortress Europe: Understanding the gendered experiences of sextortion of Nigerians migrating to the Netherlands

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“Giving Up Your Body to Enter Fortress Europe: Understanding the gendered experiences of sextortion of Nigerians migrating to the Netherlands”

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Abstract

Corruption is a frequent companion of irregular migrants along their journey, however, as they often have little financial resources available or deplete them quickly along the difficult route, paying for monetary bribes can be difficult. Therefore, this paper analyses the occurrence of a non-financial form of corruption, i.e. sextortion. Sextortion is a largely unexplored form of corruption in which sexual favours function as means of payment. To establish a better understanding of the occurrence of sextortion, this paper explores the gendered experiences of this form of corruption for Nigerians migrating to the Netherlands.

The paper is based on interviews with experts on migration, gender and corruption in the Nigerian and Dutch context. The results show that Nigerian migrants are most vulnerable to encounter sextortion in Nigeria, Libya, Niger, and Italy. The extortion of sexual favours often occurs in addition to financial bribes, making it not the primary purpose of the exchange, but not underplaying its importance.

While women are most often seen as the survivors of sextortion, also men and non-binary individuals are at risk to encounter sextortion. Besides gender, the results indicate that age, economic situation, and the availability of a social network influence a migrant's vulnerability. Furthermore, Nigerian migrants often experience different sources of pressure to succeed their journeys which take away the element of choice when encountering sextortion.

Keywords: Sextortion, Migration, Corruption, Gender-based and sexual violence, Nigeria, South-North Migration, EU Migration Policy

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1. Introduction

Mobility is defined as “*the ability to move freely or be easily moved*” (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). The extent to which a person can be mobile often depends on one’s ability to cross country borders, which in turn is often determined by the passport someone holds. Typically, citizens of developing countries face more limitations when it comes to regular migration than those of developed countries (Beauchemin, Flahaux & Schoumaker, 2020).

While these limitations make accessing regular migration pathways difficult, they do not stop people from migrating. Instead, people seek alternative ways and start using irregular routes (Beauchemin et al., 2020; De Haas, 2007). These irregular routes are often physically challenging and put migrants in an extremely vulnerable position (Baldwin-Edwards, Blitz & Crawley, 2019; Collyer, 2007) as pressure on governments to stop people from migrating irregularly has consequences such as stricter border control practices which worsen the position of migrants further (Collyer, 2007). In combination with the absence of social networks and scarcity of basic human needs, migrants are dependent on actors who may ask for too much in return. Indeed, this actor is also often seen to be someone with formal power and what is asked by the actor does not necessarily have to be money. For example, ‘sextortion’, a specific, gendered form of corruption is often encountered yet often left undiscussed (Feigenblatt, 2020; Merkle, Reinold & Siegel, 2017).

As defined by the International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), sextortion is “*the abuse of power to obtain a sexual benefit or advantage*” (IAWJ, 2012, p. 5)¹. In other words, instead of financial resources, the use of one’s body is demanded as a form of payment. Sextortion can be observed in every country and sector and is facilitated by people misusing their positions of power to sexually exploit those dependent on that power (IAWJ, Marval O’Farrell Mairal & The Thomson Reuters Foundation, 2015). While this shows that sextortion contains both a corruption aspect and a gender-based violence (GBV) aspect, existing legal frameworks often fail to cover the offence (Eldén et al., 2020). This fits a broader trend in which sextortion is often neglected in global debates and research about corruption.

Consequently, this research is exploring the occurrence of sextortion, specifically in the context of migration, where sextortion is posing a threat to migrants in every stage of the migration process (Merkle et al., 2017). We explore how Nigerian migrating to the Netherlands have experienced sextortion throughout their journey and ask: “*What are the gendered experiences of sextortion of Nigerians migrating to the Netherlands?*” To answer this question, three sub-questions are discussed (1) *How and where do Nigerian migrants experience sextortion during their journey?* (2) *How are the experiences of sextortion different for different genders?* (3) *Which characteristics of migrants increase their vulnerability to experiencing sextortion?*

The perception and use of corruption and sexual transactions, as well as the drivers of migration in Nigeria make Nigeria an interesting case study to look at (Mensah, 2020; Ubi, Eko & Ndem, 2012). Along their journeys to the European Union (EU), they experience different sources of pressure in which human traffickers play a significant role (Carling, 2006; Myria, 2018; Shelley, 2014). Upon arrival, Nigerian migrants often find themselves unable to attain the necessary legal documents to stay and are

¹ In academic literature, sextortion is also frequently defined as a form of blackmail in which intimate and sexually explicit materials are used (Kopecky, 2017; Wolak, Finkelhor, Walsh & Treitman, 2018). Sextortion as described by this definition will not be addressed in this research.

forced to return (CBS, 2021). Even though considerable research has been done exploring the journeys of migrants (e.g. Idemudia & Boehnke, 2020; Obi-Ani et al., 2020), the understanding of the exact experiences and challenges can be said to be deficient.

This paper will continue with a literature before presenting a short discussion of the case study. Thereafter the methodology will be presented and sequentially the results and discussion to conclude this research paper.

2. Literature Review

Until now there is only a limited amount of literature focusing on sextortion, therefore, we will draw on literature on corruption and gender-based violence (GBV) first. Furthermore, to contextualise the case study, literature on migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe will be presented. The section will start off with defining the main concepts used in this paper.

2.1. Corruption

Corruption is “*the abuse of entrusted power for private gain*” (Transparency, International, n.d.). Hence, the differences in power levels between people are utilised for goods, money, services, or sexual favours (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020). This can take various forms, such as embezzlement, nepotism, bribery, and extortion (Ahmeti, Gjonbalaj, Blyta & Lumezi, 2012; Andvig, Fjeldstad, Weltzein, Amundsen, Sissener & Søreide, 2001). Furthermore, it can occur at different societal levels, ranging from corruption at the policy-making level to corruption at the bureaucratic level (Andvig et al., 2001). In fact, it can happen anywhere, involve anyone, and rapidly adapt to changing environments (Transparency International, n.d.). The fact that corruption can manifest in many different ways contributes to the lack of an all-encompassing, inter-disciplinary theoretical framework and an effective approach towards corruption (Collier, 2002; Judge, McNatt & Xu, 2011). Yet, looking at the many negative effects it has on a macro, meso, and micro level, the creation of an effective approach to decrease corruption levels is desirable (Ahmeti et al., 2012; Gillanders, 2016; Tavits, 2008; Ugur & Dasgupta, 2011).

In societies where corruption levels are high, individuals sometimes feel corruption is their only way to survive. The acceptance of the corrupt environment and normalisation of the use of corrupt channels may aggravate corruption levels. This illustrates a vicious circle in which the current corruption levels stimulate the use of corruption (Senu, 2020). Furthermore, the hidden nature of corruption and high levels of underreporting further complicate curbing the phenomenon (Ugur & Dasgupta, 2011). Even when the corrupt act has a direct victim, the perpetrator generally faces low risks of being caught (Hope, 2018). This is because people, especially in developing countries, may perceive the costs to report a corrupt act as too high, which can be directly attributed to a lack of trust that reporting will lead to prosecution, as well as the fear of repercussions (Akhter, 2004; Hope, 2018; Marenin, 1997).

The consequences for individuals are especially concerning considering that corruption has a disproportionately negative effect on groups that are already found to be more vulnerable in societies, including the poor, women, and minority groups with other influential factors being age or ethnicity (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Ugur & Dasgupta, 2011). To conceptualise how the combination of these characteristics affect one’s vulnerability to being targeted by acts like corruption, it is essential to introduce the concept of intersectionality, which is a multidimensional approach to understanding someone’s position, both considering privileged and underprivileged positions. Indeed, intersectionality considers someone’s characteristics and how these characteristics may or may not aggravate their vulnerability further in combination (Eige, n.d.).

2.2. Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

With GBV, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (n.d.) refers to “harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender”. GBV is largely influenced by gender inequality, power asymmetries, and societal norms. GBV knows four main forms, which are sexual, physical, psychological and economic violence (Eige, n.d.). In light of the conversation on sextortion, which always includes sexual violence, sexual violence as a form of GBV may be most interesting to look at. However, as these forms are often observed as combinations, sometimes even reinforcing each other, it is relevant to expand on GBV in a broader context (Heise et al., 2002; Eige, n.d.; UNHCR, n.d.).

Like corruption, it is challenging to create an all-encompassing overview of the types of GBV. One of the reasons for this is the lack of a universally accepted definition of GBV, which is resulting in different ideas about what acts do and do not constitute as GBV (Simon-Butler & McSherry, 2019; Thomas, Darkal & Goodson, 2020). Furthermore, GBV is highly underreported (Freedman, 2016; Ozcurumez, Akyuz & Bradby, 2021), as a result of barriers to seek justice, difficulties to discuss topics that are considered taboo, shame and stigma, and fear of reprisals (Butler, Gluch & Mitchell, 2007; Freedman, 2016; Raistick & Maglietti, 2014).

Yet, like corruption, GBV has drastic consequences. For survivors², these consequences may be physical and psychological complaints (IOM, 2015; Lundgren, Heimer, Westerstrand & Kalliokoski, 2002; Mittal & Singh, 2020; UNHCR, n.d.b), including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, stigmatisation and mental health repercussion such as a depleted sense of self-worth (Goodson, Darkal, Hassan, Taal & Philimore, 2020; Yohani & Okeke-Ihejirika, 2018). Additionally, there may be physical consequences after experiencing GBV, such as headaches, numbness, recurrent pain (Lundgren et al., 2002), falling pregnant or contracting communicable diseases such as HIV (Merkle et al., 2017; Mittal & Singh, 2020).

As to whom is most vulnerable to GBV, literature specifically identifies women, connecting GBV to persisting gender inequalities (Goodson et al., 2020; Infante, Leyva-Flores, Gutierrez, Quintino-Perez, Torres-Robles & Gomez-Zaldívar, 2020; IOM, 2015; UNHCR, n.d.b). This underlines that for GBV to be decreased, a change in societal norms and structures is crucial (Carroll, 2020; Infante et al., 2020). At the same time, men and non-binary individuals should not be neglected in the conversation about GBV (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Freedman, 2015; Goodson et al., 2020; OHCHR, 2014; Oladepo, Yusuf & Arulogun, 2011; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011; Ozcurumez et al., 2021). Especially in the context of migration, it is important to consider vulnerabilities of men and non-binary individuals as well (OHCHR, 2014; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011). Furthermore, it should be taken into account that data on the instances of GBV may be biased as men are even less likely to speak up about their experiences of GBV. This can be linked back to masculinity and existing norms about their behaviour and attitudes. Unfortunately, this bias distorts our perception of how frequently or infrequently these events occur (Brigden, 2018; Hlavka, 2017; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011).

Apart from gender, one’s vulnerability is influenced by one’s race, age, social class, religion, sexuality, and (dis)ability (Eige, n.d.). Again, the concept of intersectionality explains how the vulnerable position is aggravated further, not only by the accumulation of independent factors, but also by the combined effect of factors (Eige, n.d.).

² The term “survivor” has been used intentionally throughout this research to prevent portraying the survivors as passive victims and neglecting their agency (Ivnik, 2017; Ozcurumez et al., 2021).

2.3 Corruption and GBV during Migration

As both corruption and GBV target the most vulnerable, migrants can be said to be at risk during every stage of migration. Both offences are widespread during migration and shape the experiences of migrants (Brigden, 2018; Merkle et al., 2017; Ogbé et al., 2021).

Here, migrants' limited accessibility of resources and services and their unfamiliarity with rights or the juridical systems plays a huge role, making them extremely dependent on other actors. This is, again, especially true for irregular migrants during transit or in situations of displacement (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Casillas, 2011; Fleury, 2016; Freedman, 2016). In order to attain certain goods or services or proceed a journey, irregular migrants may have to act against their will, such as agree to corrupt exchanges (Merkle, Reinold & Siegel, 2018). Furthermore, their inability to voice their experiences and the anonymity of perpetrators inhibit their ability to seek justice (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Casillas, 2011). What further aggravates these vulnerabilities are existing policies in place to prevent migrants from entering transit and destination countries (Freedman, 2015; Goodson et al., 2020).

Research has shown that, corruption commonly occurs around border areas (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Chêne, 2018) and along some specific migration corridors. Sometimes it is the case that there is close cooperation between active criminal groups and public officials. Here, corrupt acts may be increasingly seen as normal (Agbu, 2003; Casillas, 2011). Yet, even though corruption during migration is very common, the experiences of migrants differ in terms of level, depth, and severity (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020).

Personal characteristics of migrants, such as gender, race, disability, age, social class, religion, language, and sexuality, may determine one's vulnerability. These characteristics may interlink with, and reinforce each other (Bastia, 2014; Eige, n.d.; IOM, 2015). Research has found that, especially for women and non-binary individuals, weak financial, social, and political positions, as well as high dependency on men, is worsening their positions in many countries (Fleury, 2016; Goodson et al., 2020; IOM, 2015). Moreover, specific circumstances, such as women travelling alone or only with children, increase the risk of encountering GBV (Fleury, 2016; Freedman, 2016; Goodson et al., 2020).

Looking at the other side of the offences, it can be noted that perpetrators of GBV are often people in formal positions of power. Common perpetrators are often connected to human smuggling and trafficking networks, including state officials, such as police and border guards. This is especially the case in places where corruption levels are high (Goodson et al., 2020) (Butler et al., 2007). It may be that in states with lower corruption levels, survivors have better access to justice, making it easier to keep perpetrators accountable for their acts.

2.4 Sextortion

As argued before, sextortion is at the intersection of corruption and GBV. A specific narrative brought forward by research is the narrative in which men are required to pay bribes with money, while women are required to pay with their bodies (Brigden, 2018; Merkle et al., 2017). Indeed, a person's gender determines the type of corruption to which this person is exposed (IAWJ, 2012; Merkle et al., 2018). Hence, it is important to look at the occurrence of sextortion more narrowly.

Sextortion is defined by the IAWJ as "the abuse of power to obtain a sexual benefit or advantage" (2012, p. 5) and contains both a corruption and a GBV component. Regarding the GBV component of sextortion, there should be an act of sexual violence involved. Simply put, a sexual favour is demanded,

which is unwanted by the person it is demanded of (IAWJ, 2012; IAWJ et al., 2015). Regarding to the corruption component, an act should meet the following three conditions (IAWJ, 2012):

1. The abuse of power
2. A *quid pro quo* or “this-for-that” agreement
3. Psychological coercion

Sextortion largely focuses on the misconduct of a person in a position of entrusted authority. Regardless of whether that person initiated the sexual exchange or went along with someone else’s initiative, he or she should be considered a perpetrator of sextortion (Eldén, Calvo, Bjarnegård, Lundgren & Jonsson, 2020). In addition, the presence of a transactional aspect in sextortion is essential, as it distinguishes sextortion from other forms of sexual violence such as rape or sexual abuse. Instead of, or additional to physical coercion, psychological coercion comes to play as the survivor wants something that is in the power of the perpetrator to grant or withhold (Eldén et al., 2020).

Furthermore, existing gender norms and structures are identified as an important factor resulting in an imbalance of power and influencing the occurrence of sextortion (Feigenblatt, 2020; Merkle, 2018; Merkle et al., 2017). This is exemplified by the fact that perpetrators are mostly men, and survivors are mostly women (Eldén et al., 2020; Merkle et al., 2017). Regarding male survivors, it is notable that the majority are younger men, which shows the role age plays in influencing one’s vulnerability to encounter sextortion (Eldén et al., 2020).

The fact that sextortion is such a specific phenomenon partly explains why it often slips through existing legislation (Feigenblatt, 2020; IAWJ et al., 2015). As already touched upon in the introduction, corruption often merely focuses on transactions that include a financial payment. Thus, legislation may fail to consider the use of a sexual favour as a way of paying. At the same time, using legislation on GBV may be complicated by the consensual aspect of sextortion. Here, legislation often fails to take into account the power asymmetries and psychological coercion that are playing a role in sextortion (Eldén et al., 2020; IAWJ et al., 2015). What should also be considered is that in some countries, the use of sexual transactions is embedded in societies and is used as a way to survive (Eldén et al., 2020; Mensah, 2020). If survivors may not consider the transaction as a crime, they will not report it.

2.5 Sextortion during Migration

The migration context is one of the most significant contexts in which sextortion has been observed (Eldén et al., 2020; Feigenblatt, 2020). Despite the lack of academic literature on sextortion in migration, different articles discussing migrant experiences describe the occurrence of acts that would constitute sextortion (e.g. Freedman, 2016; Infante et al., 2020; IOM, 2015; Mikhnovets, 2018; Yazid & Natania, 2017). Here, it is sometimes found that terms as ‘Transactional Sex’ or ‘Survival Sex’ are used. Nevertheless, sextortion is a narrower phenomenon in which the abuse of trusted authority is of importance. These differentiations are not always made clear. Furthermore, there is only a thin line dividing sextortion from other forms of GBV (Infante et al., 2020).

Referring back to those most vulnerable to experiencing GBV, it can be expected that also for sextortion, migrants, especially irregular migrants, find themselves at high risk (Merkle et al., 2017; UNFPA, 2006). Even though sextortion can occur at any stage of the migration process, it is observed most frequently during transit or in situations of displacements, such as in refugee camps or natural disaster zones (Eldén et al., 2020; Feigenblatt, 2020). Again, the limited social network makes migrants increasingly dependent on third parties (Merkle et al., 2018). This can be observed in situations where migrants

require documents or try to cross the border. Here, sexual favours can be used to pay for the crossing of an individual, as well as for a whole group (Merkle et al., 2017). Furthermore, sexual acts can be demanded in exchange for goods and services such as transportation, food, or accommodation (IOM, 2015).

Especially if one has a weak economic situation, the body might be the only thing left to trade (Eldén et al., 2020; Merkle et al., 2017). The same goes for one's socio-economic position. A weaker socio-economic position or belonging to a marginalised group makes people more dependent, as this may be directly connected to factors such as fewer resources, opportunities, and power, or less security (Eldén et al., 2020). Lastly, migrants, particularly women, who are travelling alone are found more vulnerable (Merkle et al., 2017). However, like with GBV, it is important to note that the sextortion does not exclusively target women and that the fact that most perpetrators of sextortion are found to be men does not mean that men are not targets themselves (Feigenblatt, 2020; IAWJ, 2012).

The aforementioned literature has pointed out that one faces several constraints to speak up against corruption and GBV in general, as well as against sextortion specifically. However when one considers the migration context, an additional point is that sextortion is often specifically found to be a migrant's only way to survive (Merkle et al., 2018). The feeling of having no choice is stimulated further by the high pressure that migrants experience, such as by expectations from their families and the potential consequences of returning to the country of origin (Merkle et al., 2017). This raises the discussion on consent, in which one can state that a person cannot be blamed for agreeing if no rational alternative option was available. Hence, victim-blaming should be prevented at all times, and the situation has to be relativised by taking into account the power imbalance between the perpetrator and the survivor (Eldén et al., 2020).

2.6 Migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to the EU

Now that a theoretical foundation on corruption, GBV, and sextortion is established, it is essential to put the discussion in a specific context. Hence, the context applicable to look at is the migration flow from Sub-Saharan Africa to the EU.

Migration is a phenomenon that has been observed for centuries (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, most migration is happening within the continent (Héran, 2018; IOM, 2020; Spadavecchia, 2013; Świerczyńska & Kliber, 2018). Yet, different factors such as the development of free mobility agreements, globalisation and technological enhancements enable people to form connections across the globe (Obi-Ani et al., 2020; Schapendonk, 2012b). This creates an increased awareness that feeds into a growing desire to seek opportunities elsewhere (Collyer, 2007). The decision to act on the aspiration to migrate can be one's individual decision, as well as a decision made by the migrant's family as a whole. Here, migration may be seen as an investment which can lift a whole family from poverty (Carling, 2006).

Yet, as already touched upon in the introduction, EU Member States are becoming more and more restrictive of immigration (Schapendonk, 2012b). These restrictions are connected to the negative discourse towards migration generally, but also to the fear that migration from Sub-Saharan Africa will continue to grow at concerning levels and threaten the 'Western' world (Héran, 2018; Schapendonk, 2012b).

Hence, stricter rules are used to make regular pathways inaccessible, but are simultaneously making irregular pathways people's only way to reach the perceived ample available opportunities in EU

(Beauchemin et al., 2020; Schapendonk, 2012a). As entering one of the EU Member States means access to all Member States, collective efforts are made to securitise the borders and prevent the irregular migrants from entering (Schapendonk, 2012b). These efforts include securitisation of the EU's own borders as well as the creation of bilateral agreements with non-EU countries to create "buffer zones" or facilitate return (Brigden & Mainwaring, 2016). All in all, the EU pushes African countries to follow their example by inheriting a discourse in which migration should be prevented. In other words, prioritising a Eurocentric approach (IOM, 2020).

While these efforts are not stopping migrants from trying to reach the EU, they do impact migration in other ways. Indeed, they have increased the vulnerabilities faced by migrants during their journeys even further (Brigden & Mainwaring, 2016; Collyer, 2007; de Haas et al., 2020; Schapendonk, 2012b). Furthermore, they fuel anti-migrant and xenophobic discourse.

En route, irregular migrants do not have a legal position and are therefore not protected by authorities. Worse, they fear authorities as encountering them could mean being punished with imprisonment or deportation. Therefore, in an effort to evade authorities, they often take extremely risky routes (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). As mentioned throughout the literature review, this usually entails encountering different forms of corruption and GBV, including sextortion. Therefore, the securitisation of borders is making journeys even riskier and more fragmented. In other words, it is stimulating the vulnerable position of migrants even further (Beauchemin et al., 2020; Collyer, 2007; De Haas, 2007; Schapendonk, 2012b).

3 Case Study

Having built a theoretical foundation, it is important to dive into the case study that centres this research paper. The specific context in which sextortion is encountered, as well as the culture, social norms and values, and past experiences of those encountering it influence behaviours and perceptions (Manohar, Liamputtong, Bhole, Arora, 2017). In other words, the gendered experiences of sextortion of Nigerian migrants can never be fully understood without considering where Nigerians are coming from.

3.1 Nigeria's Cultural Context

In light of the topic of sextortion, it is therefore essential to emphasise the prevalence of corruption at every level of Nigerian society (Agbiboa, 2013; Hope, 2018). Indeed, Nigeria is one of the countries with the highest corruption levels globally (Transparency International, 2021). Even though some Nigerians may be aware that corruption is inherently wrong, it is justified and perceived as a way to survive (Bamidele et al., 2016; Hope, 2018). It can be the case that these past experiences and perceptions influence one's future behaviour (Bamidele, Olaniyan & Ayodele, 2016). Hence, it may also influence the way one navigates through migration.

Besides corruption, GBV is also observed at concerning levels, targeting both men and women (Oladepo et al., 2011). How GBV and, more specifically, sexual violence is perceived differs throughout Nigeria. This becomes clear when looking at the varying perceptions of the use of transactional sex by Nigerian women (Osezua, 2013; Siegel, 2007). While sexual transactions are considered with disgust in some areas, in others, it is seen as a normal service. In fact, women who are using their bodies may even be respected in some areas, as they take control and improve their own status in society (Osezua, 2013). This complicates the ability to consider how the sexual violence component of sextortion may be perceived. Yet, regardless of the perceptions, it is evident that Nigerians, especially young women, may

be accustomed to sacrificing their bodies to survive, which may also influence their future encounters of sextortion, for example, during migration (Giorgio et al., 2016).

3.2 Migration from Nigeria

Nigeria has been a country of emigration for years (UNDESA, 2019). The country's economic and political climate can be considered two major factors stimulating the outward movement of its citizens (IOM, 2018; Obi-Ani et al., 2020). A significant percentage of Nigerians live below the international poverty line and unemployment continues to be high (UN Data, 2021). As there is not much hope for betterment, many Nigerians look for opportunities elsewhere (Obi-Ani et al., 2020).

Besides the economic situation, the political unrest in the country plays a role. This relates to the presence of the terrorist group, Boko Haram, as well as the ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity (CIFORB, n.d.; Kamta et al., 2020; Obi-Ani et al., 2020; The World Bank, 2020), the latter of which specifically has been accredited for violence in the country (African Research Bulletin, 2017; Onapajo & Usman, 2015).

With these circumstances in mind, it should be noted that it is rarely just one factor leading to someone deciding to migrate. Rather, it is a combination of different factors, relating to one's personal position as well as the overarching context someone is in all contribute to the decision (de Haas et al., 2020; Kamta et al., 2020).

3.3 Migrant Routes to Europe

Although the EU may not be the main destination for Nigerian migrants, it has been observing high numbers of Nigerian migrants every year (European Commission, 2017; Obi-Ani et al., 2020). As explained in the literature review, migrants heavily rely on irregular pathways (Obi-Ani et al., 2020; Schapendonk, 2012a) with many migrants coming to Europe relying on alternate means such as using fake or someone else's valid documents to travel by air in the past, however current technologies are increasingly advanced to detect such instances (Obi-Ani et al., 2020) which push migrants to travel over land and sea instead (Ellis & Akpala, 2011; IOM, 2018).

Hence, the journeys through the desert and across the Mediterranean Sea have become increasingly prevalent (Ellis & Akpala, 2011). Here, the two main routes that Nigerians often utilise to migrate to the EU are identified: the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and the Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) (Idemudia & Boehnke, 2020; Obi-Ani et al., 2020). Again, it is noted that volatile circumstances en route mean that the actual routes migrants use may change (Ellis & Akpala, 2011; Schapendonk, 2012a; Shelley, 2014). Yet, regardless of the specific routes, travelling in this manner is extremely dangerous, certainly considering the circumstances in which migrants cross the Mediterranean Sea. However, even before crossing this sea, the CMR is particularly dangerous as it requires crossing through Libya, where human rights violations are the norm (Idemudia & Boehnke, 2020; OHCHR, 2016).

With migration becoming more challenging, human trafficking networks have rapidly spread throughout Nigeria, facilitating many of the journeys to Europe (Ellis & Akpala, 2011)(Agbu, 2003; Ellis & Akpala, 2011; Obi-Ani et al., 2020; Osezua, 2013). This often involves the practice of juju (also known as voodoo or black magic) (Carling, 2006; Ellis & Akpala, 2011; Myria, 2018). Juju is a well-known ritual in Nigerian society, both in Christianity and Islam (Baarda, 2016). Even though juju in nature cannot be said to be good nor bad, it is rather how it is misused that links it to an extremely exploitative medium. Human traffickers are using juju to keep control over the person who is being trafficked both during

the journey and at the destination (Baarda, 2016; Carling, 2006; Myria, 2018). The trafficked person faces extreme consequences, such as death, if the person fails to obey to the traffickers. Besides, juju is used to keep Nigerians from speaking about their experiences (Carling, 2006; Myria, 2018).

If the Nigerian migrants manage to survive the passage, they generally enter the EU through Spain, Italy, or Malta (Okonofua, Ogbomwan, Alutu, Kufre & Eghosa, 2004). They either apply for asylum or stay undocumented (Obi-Ani et al., 2020), the latter making it extremely difficult to get an accurate estimation of the total number of Nigerian migrants residing in Europe.

Those who do decide to apply for asylum have, generally, extremely low chances to be granted asylum (aida, 2020; IND, n.d.; Rijksoverheid, 2018). They are therefore offered the option to return voluntarily. While this may sound like a reasonable opportunity at first, it should be noted that the circumstances that motivated one to migrate and the pressure experienced by the migrant have not changed. Instead, it may have worsened, as now also a feeling of shame and disappointment is playing a role. Some may have made sacrifices to enable migration, sometimes even at the expense of their family, therefore they nothing to which they could return (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). Considering that returning is no reasonable option, many choose to stay in the EU despite not having visas or documents (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). Here, they may find themselves, again, in a hopeless situation where they cannot work. This weak position makes them highly vulnerable to be pulled in criminality.

4. Methodology

This working paper is presenting an exploratory study, using a qualitative research method. 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with experts in the field of migration, GBV, and corruption. The decision to focus on interviews with experts instead of interviews with migrants themselves is made with an eye on the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which required all interviews being conducted virtually. This interviewing method would not have allowed to conduct interviews with vulnerable migrants themselves in a responsible and appropriate way. Interviewees were based in Nigeria and the Netherlands.

The interview participants have been selected using a combination of convenience and snowball sampling. Both methods are considered most fitting looking at the limited scope of the research and the general unfamiliarity around the specific concept of sextortion. The sampling methods resulted in a research sample with varying expertise such as experts in the Dutch asylum system, researchers who have also explored the experiences of Nigerian migrants in the Netherlands and gender experts, among others. Although closely connected to migration, corruption and/or GBV, participants had various backgrounds in terms of gender, occupation, and location. The topic is highly sensitive both for the migrants themselves but also from a policy perspective, hence the research has been reviewed by Maastricht University's ethics review board.

Due to the persisting COVID-19 situation the findings entirely rely on the experiences of secondary actors, rather than migrants themselves. Hence, the results are dependent on what migrants have shared before. During the interviews it became clear that the unfamiliarity around the topic of sextortion may have left the act relatively undiscussed among researchers, as well as interview participants in the past.. Interview participants may have not specifically focused on discussing instances of sextortion or checked whether instances of, for example, GBV included an actor in a formal position. Lastly, the positionality of the researchers themselves can be seen as a limitation. Qualitative research is about understanding phenomena through the experiences and perceptions of a research

population (Leavy, 2014). Similar to how the participants' narratives can be influenced through external factors such as culture, norms and values, and past experiences, external factors may also influence how the researcher has interpreted and processed different information throughout the writing process (Manohar et al., 2017). To overcome such external factors, the researchers have triangulated data and included literature written by European and African authors and the voices of European and African interview participants.

5. Results and Discussion

Firstly, the occurrence of corruption and sextortion will be discussed for Nigerian migrants. This is followed by a discussion touching upon how experiences differ for different genders. Finally, the research presents characteristics that increase the vulnerability of Nigerians to encounter instances of sextortion.

5.1 Sextortion during Migration

In accordance with the literature, the data confirmed that corruption is embedded in Nigerian society. Here, also sextortion is regularly observed. Two sectors that were highlighted are the education sector and the police sector. Both are sectors in which sextortion is, indeed, found to be very prevalent (Feigenblatt, 2020). Additionally, sextortion was often discussed in the context of refugee camps in the north of Nigeria.

While it is very clear that sextortion is happening in Nigeria, less information is available about the experiences in transit countries. A reason for this is that a significant share of Nigerian migrants are being trafficked and only little information is available on the exact involvement of third parties. Yet, human trafficking could not occur to this extent without the occurrence of corruption, making it a suitable environment for sextortion to occur as well. It is important to note here that migrants often face difficulties distinguishing the actors that hold formal power. Interviewees noted that en route, migrants may be unsure whether they had been abused by real officers or merely by people who were pretending to be officers. A lack of knowledge about geography and their exact travel routes may also play a role.

Nevertheless, data indicates that Libya and Italy can be marked as places where migrants are particularly vulnerable to encounter sextortion. This highly corresponds with existing literature on sexual violence (Merkle et al., 2017; OHCHR, 2016). Furthermore, Niger, particularly its desert in the north, is considered as an area where instances of sextortion are expected to take place more often. Considering the free mobility of Nigerians through Niger (ECOWAS, 2021), this finding shows that not only irregular migrants experience sextortion. Hence, as one of the research participants explains:

“So, when you're leaving Nigeria at the border, even though it's part of ECOWAS and you're allowed to freely leave the country, you're still supposed to show some sort of identification. So, there are official checks there. There are official checks in Niger, supposedly there are official checks when you're coming into Libya. So, I think that there are supposedly checks all along the way. But I think the system is so corrupt in and of itself that people understand that as long as you have the money or that you're willing to give up your body, this is just the way... It's a rite of passage. I suppose it is part of the understanding. However, as of their irregular status, Nigerians may encounter public officials who are trying to extort sexual favours at any point during their journey. I suppose it's part of the understanding.”

Sextortion was also experienced by Nigerian migrants who had not even reached Europe. Many Nigerians who were traveling to Europe got stuck in Libya, where they were often exploited for several

months, even years (OHCHR, 2016). Interviewees recounted that when the Nigerian government started to actively deport Nigerians who had gotten stuck in Libya, cases of sextortion were reported. Here, public officials extorted sexual favours from Nigerians in exchange to be included on deportation lists. Although the Nigerians who survived sextortion at this stage of migration may have never reached Europe, these stories still fit within the scope of this research as the Nigerians were on their ways to Europe. Hence, neglecting those who had to return along the way would mean neglecting part of the story.

When encountering sextortion along the journey, it was often the case that migrants were asked for sexual favours in addition to a bribe. Here, money is described as a perpetrator's priority and sexual favours as an additional term of payment. This relates to the weak working conditions of perpetrators in many transit countries, particularly in the African continent. Their weaker economic position stirs frustration and stimulates a search for other ways to make a living. As one respondent phrases it:

“But most times when it's Africa, it is still about... It is money first, sex comes second, because they're women and they're seen because of the inequalities [...] So corruption itself is the money and the porousness and all of those issues. Then there is the opportunity to further exploit on the basis of sex. And I mean, on the basis that they are women, we might as well then just have sex with them.”

Hence, the situation manifests itself in a gendered situation where every migrant is demanded a financial payment, and women are demanded an additional sexual favour. This frames sextortion in the migration context as a supplement rather than an alternative to bribes, slightly different from how existing research may describe it in the context of developed countries (Merkle et al., 2017).

5.2 Gendered Experiences

Looking more closely at the gendered aspect of sextortion, it is relevant to discuss to what extent experiences of women, men, and non-binary individuals differ. In accordance with literature, gender was identified as the characteristic that influenced a migrant's vulnerability most (Eldén et al., 2020; Merkle et al., 2017). In addition to the different experiences, the difference in expectations of women, men, and non-binary individuals was brought up regularly. All three will be discussed separately below.

5.2.1 Women, Men, and Non-binary Individuals

In accordance with the literature, women were considered most vulnerable to experiencing sextortion. This corresponds with the general finding that marks women more vulnerable to experiencing sexual violence than men, as well as the role of persisting gender norms that place women in a subordinate position (Goodson et al., 2020; Infante et al., 2020; IOM, 2015; UNHCR, n.d.). It was also argued that how women are perceived in society generally – for example, as prostitutes and engaging in all sorts of transactional sex – makes them more vulnerable to sextortion. In other words, perpetrators justify their actions thinking that women already engage in transactional sex and may therefore just as well pay their bribes using their bodies.

“So, when it comes to sextortion, it's usually the women who are more vulnerable to this for obvious reasons. Women have been known to be prostitutes... [Women have been known] to engage in transactional sex at different levels... So, for this reason, women, women and children, even female children, not just women. So, I would say on the average, the female gender between the ages of 13 to 35 are the major targets of sextortion” – Interview

In the literature, non-binary individuals were described as equally vulnerable to GBV as women (Ozcurrence et al., 2021). This was, however, not something that was explicitly mentioned during the interviews. Research participants did indicate that non-binary individuals are in a more vulnerable position towards experiencing violence generally. This is a result of their extremely weak position in Nigeria, as well as in the countries they travel through (Lotter & Fourie, 2020; Makanjuola, Folayan & Oginni, 2018).

Furthermore, research participants highlighted the appearance of a non-binary individual as a reinforcing factor to experience violence. As an example, one expert pointed out that transgender individuals who had not fully completed their transition faced more risk of violence. This applied to the whole journey, as well as in asylum centres in the Netherlands (Interviews). Again, this finding considers all forms of violence rather than sextortion specifically. Nevertheless, it does indicate that non-binary individuals find themselves in a more vulnerable situation. This situation may feed into the already high dependency that migrants have towards public officials and weakens their position when demanded a sexual favour by public officials.

A concern that multiple experts have raised is the hidden nature of sexual violence experienced by men. That women are found more vulnerable towards sexual violence than men does not mean that men cannot experience sexual violence during migration (Bullock & Jenkins, 2020; Freedman, 2015; Goodson et al., 2020; OHCHR, 2014; Oladepo et al., 2011; Ozcurrence et al., 2021). Again, it is essential to remember that migrants are already in a vulnerable position, independent of gender. As one of the research participants mentions: "So, [sextortion] certainly happens to men if they are in a sufficiently vulnerable position and if a person in a position of power has an interest in a sexual relationship with them."

It is therefore important to avoid framing sextortion as an instance that is only targeting women and non-binary individuals. One research participant expressed her belief that male migrants are equally vulnerable to experiencing sexual violence. She argues that there is just a distorted perception resulting from higher shame and stigma that prevents male survivors from speaking up. Additionally, she claims there is generally too little attention to reveal stories of GBV experienced by men (Interview). Indeed, both statements conform with existing research that points at the persisting concept of masculinity which is excluding male survivors from the GBV discourse (Brigden, 2018; Hlavka, 2017; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011). With an eye on the widespread consequences that experiencing GBV has, the ignorance towards male survivors is problematic (e.g. Goodson et al., 2020; Lundgren et al., 2002; Yohani & Okeke-Ihejirika, 2018).

5.2.2 Gendered Expectations

In relation to the differences between male and female experiences of sextortion, the different expectations that men and women have regarding encountering sexual violence during migration were a returning theme. Connected to persisting gender norms and the weaker position of women in the Nigerian context, women are expected to be more aware of sexual violence being something that they will face and have to endure during the journey. They may have been exposed to sexual violence in the past, either as a primary or secondary experience. As one of the research participants explains:

"I think that the way we [women] move through the world, we are a lot more conscious of violence. Just, you know, walking out of your house at 10 p.m. at night, the average man is not looking over their shoulder every five minutes. Right. When you walk out, there is a consciousness that you have to be aware of. So, I think that's already just the general mindset for

women. And so, when it comes to migration, there is a level of preparedness because there's an understanding that the chances of you getting through this situation unscathed are extremely low. So, I think there's a level of mental preparation that needs to be understood by women before they leave Nigeria." – Interview

In addition, another research participant mentions that it is connected to what has been taught to Nigerian girls when they are young. Women have been taught they are subduing men, and when demanded something, they should adhere. So, they know it will happen, and what they need to do when it happens (Interview).

There are also some narratives in which women have been either implicitly or explicitly informed that they will experience sexual violence during migration, for instance, when someone is told to bring condoms or use contraceptives before the journey. One of the research participants who is working with female survivors of GBV, including (return) migrants, touched upon this referring to the experiences of a journalist who was in contact with a smuggler in Nigeria. Here, she touched upon the general mental preparedness of Nigerian women.

"I remember, there was a CNN interview a few years ago. It was 2017 where the journalist was undercover, and she was looking for someone to smuggle her from Nigeria into Libya. And the smuggler handed her condoms and said, hey, you're going to need these, because there was just this sort of understanding that along the way you are going to be raped and you're going to be put in the position where you're going to have to give up your body for your ultimate desire, which is to get to Europe." – Interview 17

The familiarity with and expectations of women towards sexual violence compared to men make up for remarkable differences. Again, this refers back to the higher shame and stigma experienced by male survivors of sexual violence (Brigden, 2018; Hlavka, 2017; Onyango & Hampanda, 2011). That male experiences are often left undiscussed may result in male migrants being little to not at all aware that this may also target them during migration. As one research participant who works with Nigerian migrants in the Netherlands puts it:

"Hm, I think that there is a difference between men and women. All boys I spoke to did not even have the idea that they would be raped or could be raped." – Interview

This shows that individuals of different genders may not only encounter different types of violence, but they also start from different mental places, influencing how they cope with violence. As long as these differences are not taken into account, no real picture of sexual violence during migration will be created. Stakeholders who are working with migrants, especially those trying to understand their stories and experiences, should therefore always consider the influence of the taboo on sexual violence before the instance, as well as shame and stigma after.

5.3 Characteristics Increasing Vulnerability

The last sub-question touches upon the characteristics that are making one more vulnerable to experiencing sexual violence. In accordance with literature, the most returning is the extremely vulnerable position migrants are finding themselves in, just for being migrants. "Well, my first reaction was: No, everyone is vulnerable. The fact that you are finding yourself already in the migration chain makes you vulnerable by definition".

As explained in the literature review, the concept of intersectionality explains how one's different characteristics further influence their vulnerability to experiencing sextortion (Bastia, 2014; Nash, 2008). The different characteristics that were mentioned are discussed in the following section. Thereafter, the

discussion returns to the context of Nigerian migrants, which affects the vulnerability of Nigerians as well.

5.3.1 Personal Characteristics

There are several characteristics identified that further increase the vulnerability of migrants during their journeys. Besides gender and the general vulnerability resulting from being a migrant, three factors have been frequently returning in discussions with experts. First of all, one's age is a factor that is considered playing a role. Research participants mentioned that they often found younger migrants as more vulnerable to sextortion. Again, this is in line with prior findings (Eldén et al., 2020). One participant specified the word young by mentioning that, on average, the most vulnerable group are individuals aged between 13 and 35 years old (Interview). This does, of course, not mean that people outside of this age range cannot fall prey to sextortion. As another research participant explains it:

"I believe that the younger you are, the more vulnerable you are, but that has more to do with the wishes of the perpetrator. There are women of 60 who share their stories, but there are less compared to girls of 17, 18, 19. I think that is connected to the general idea of sexuality, they are just wanted more." – Interview

Secondly, a migrant's economic status has been frequently mentioned as an important factor. This already plays a role before the journey, as a better financial position may enable the migrant to pay for the services of smugglers or traffickers who are safeguarding their safety better or who facilitate safer routes, for instance, through air travel (Interview). During the migration itself, having more financial resources strengthens a migrant's position as this person has, simply put, more to offer when encountering a corrupt official. Without financial resources, the body may be the only thing that is left to offer. As one interviewee summarised: "If you don't have any other means and you have your back against the wall, your body becomes one of the means to continue"

The third factor that came up in multiple interviews is whether someone is travelling alone or not. Again, this is something that has been brought up by prior research. If someone is travelling, either completely alone or without people from their social network, they are found in a weaker position (Merkle et al., 2017). Here, research participants mainly point at an increased dependency on third actors. One of the research participants also connected the extra vulnerability of those travelling alone to a sense of obliviousness that migrants may have at the moment of encountering an act of sexual violence or sextortion. Only later, the impact of experiencing sexual violence will become clear.

"You do often notice that they [survivors of sexual violence] are women and men who are travelling alone and do not have a partner or children yet. They are often not that highly educated, and they don't know that well how they should cope with such situation and where they should draw the line. It's likely that they were also never taught how to, as these topics are often not discussed in their cultures. So, these people are more likely to go along with it, and only later realise that it was not at all what they wanted." – Interview

In addition, it was pointed out that women travelling with their children are sometimes treated better than women travelling alone. As mothers, they may be treated with more respect and dignity.

5.3.2 Sources of Pressure

While the above-mentioned personal characteristics can be largely applied to any migrant, some aspects of the Nigerian context can be said to increase their vulnerability towards sextortion. This starts by considering what has already been touched upon in the case study; there is a strong desire to migrate

to Europe among Nigerian citizens (Obi-Ani et al., 2020). One research participant even stated that: “I think all Nigerians would like to migrate to be honest.”

This desire can be partly attributed to persisting inequality and poverty and no perspective in terms of improvement of this situation (Isbell & Ojewale, 2018; Obi-Ani et al., 2020). Many potential migrants rely on the stories of some Nigerians who did find success in Europe: those who managed to find opportunities and pushed their families out of poverty by sending back remittances (Obi-Ani et al., 2020; Siegel, 2007). With this in mind, it is only fair to reframe the narrative in which Nigerians are described to desire migrating to Europe, to a narrative in which Nigerians are described to desire migrating to opportunities, away from poverty for themselves and their families.

“At the end it is really the poverty level and the struggle opposed that they need to survive. They are finding themselves in a scenario in which they have to do whatever they can to survive. Going back empty-handed is not an option. Their family will point to other families that went and will ask: ‘Why did you not succeed when everyone else did?’ – Interview

This quote brings to discussion the pressure that Nigerian migrants experience. It underlines the desperation to fit with the success stories of Nigerians who preceded as expected from them by their families. This links back to the finding that migration is also often seen as a family investment (Carling, 2006), and that the failure to find new opportunities, will not only turn out in a poor investment for the migrants themselves. Indeed, the consequences that a returning migrant would face go beyond disappointment from the family.

“I know that there is enough information that those who are send back [to Nigeria] are isolated. They are not part of their families anymore. They are not taken back and do not receive a warm welcome. No, they are losers.” – Interview

Hence, this shows they lose their identities and homes and face huge stigmatisation. Again, this emphasises how much pressure is put on them and provides context on why they are making their decisions during migration.

If that was not already enough, indispensable for this research is the pressure experienced by migrants who have taken a vow with a *juju* priest (also known as voodoo or black magic) before migration. Even though juju is practised in multiple African countries, research participants highlight its extraordinary role in the migration context of Nigerians. The vows that Nigerians have taken before migration push them to do whatever is asked of them. Even though the juju ritual is largely used to bind migrants to the human trafficking network, migrants’ inability to identify who is and who is not part of the network (Casillas, 2011) makes for the expectation that Nigerians will obey any demand of an actor in a higher power.

Considering this context, it can be said that Nigerian migrants are under extreme pressure to make the journey work. This pressure relates to the expectations of their family, the economic situation, and the vows they have taken with priests.

“Those victims are ready to do anything to go across Africa and across the Mediterranean Sea, to get to Europe, because they face huge pressure. For they don't really... A lot of them don't really question themselves in terms of should I do this or not? No... They have to move forward. So, if they are asked for sexual favours, then they will do it. No question about that.” – Interview

This extreme pressure opens the floor to revise the transactional element in instances of sextortion. On the one hand, Nigerians may choose to use their bodies as a means of transaction, just like they may

choose to use money to pay for a bribe. But, on the other hand, how much of a say do they really have in such transactions? Considering the direct and indirect consequences of rejection, it may be argued that there is no option other than complying when one seeks to extort sexual favours. This situation makes Nigerian migrants easy targets and increases their vulnerability to experiencing sextortion.

6. Conclusion

The research reveals that Nigerian migrants are at risk to encounter sextortion throughout their whole journey. Sextortion may already be experienced in Nigeria itself, particularly in refugee camps in the north. During the journey, Libya, Italy, and the desert in Niger came up as specific countries and regions in which Nigerians face a higher risk.

We found that financial bribes are often the core of the corrupt transaction, while sexual favours are something required additionally. That financial bribes are often seen as the core may be attributed to the weak working conditions, such as low-income levels, of perpetrators in many countries in the African continent. Money and sexual favours were exchanged for anything, from products such as food and drinks to services such as protection, border crossing, and even deportation.

Experts highlighted that gender norms and structures influence the occurrence of sextortion. Women were identified as the group that is most vulnerable to experiencing sextortion during migration. Nevertheless, this statement should be considered with care, as this does not mean that male migrants are not at risk. Additional factors, such as increased shame and stigma experienced by male survivors, as well as a discourse that excludes male survivors of sexual violence may give a distorted picture. Regarding non-binary individuals, answers were rather mixed. Of course, non-binary individuals face higher risk, but this also depends on how easy it is to identify them.

There is also a gender difference in terms of awareness about the risks to encounter sextortion during migration. While women may be very aware that they will encounter sexual violence one way or another, men may be rather clueless. This gap could result in different consequences for the survivors. Indeed, highlighting the importance of paying attention to potential male survivors as well.

Apart from gender, different factors were identified that influence people's vulnerability towards experiencing sextortion. First and foremost, being a migrant already puts them in a vulnerable position. Other characteristics weaken their position further, having both an individual and combined effect on one's position. A migrants age, financial background, and whether the migrant is travelling alone are all factors that further influence one's vulnerability.

For Nigerian migrants specifically, it is important to consider the extreme pressure endured during all stages of migration. This pressure relates to expectations of themselves and their families, a hopeless economic environment they leave behind, and the owes they have taken conform to the *juju* rituals. This puts them in a position where there is just no way back. Indeed, implying that they need to sacrifice their bodies if demanded to. An alternative option is just no option.

By combining all findings of this research, it can, indeed, be confirmed that Nigerian migrants are at high risk to experience sextortion during their journeys, this includes the migrants who are trafficked. The results have also shown that taking a gendered approach is particularly important, since gender does not only influence one's vulnerability, it also influences one's perceptions both before and after experiencing sextortion.

Even though the occurrence of sextortion in migration deserves to be explored further, this research has provided enough information to consider moving forward. Hence, the following chapter will present the policy recommendations that have been developed based on the research findings.

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List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AU	African Union
CBS	Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Statistics Netherlands)
CMR	Central Mediterranean Route
CIFORB	Commonwealth Initiative for the Freedom of Religion or Belief
DT&V	Dienst Terugkeer & Vertrek (Repatriation and Departure Service)
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EMN	European Migration Network
ERCIC	Ethics Review Committee Inner City faculties
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
IAWJ	International Association of Women Judges
IBA	International Bar Association
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IND	Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigration and Naturalisation Service)
IOM	International Organization for Migration
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TI	Transparency International
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WMR	Western Mediterranean Route

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