

Causes of Human Trafficking and needed Responses to curtailing the menace in Nigeria

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Abstract

Human trafficking is largely a form of slavery. The international awareness of crime has over the years increased. Apart from the fact that Nigeria is a signatory to many international and regional instruments set out to fight against child trafficking, there exist also some domestic laws enacted by the government to fight the practice. This, notwithstanding, trafficking is still having its toll on women and children, who are indeed the future leaders in their family and society at large. The purpose of this paper is to explore the problem in Nigeria and Proffer an appropriate solution. Therefore, fighting the menace of trafficking in Nigeria is all-encompassing and requires the synergy of efforts to create public awareness of the crime, addressing poverty, creating employment, reinforcing relevant national laws, organizing counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration program for the victims.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Crime, Victims, Rehabilitation, Reintegration.

Introduction

Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world with an estimated population of about a 200million people, endowed with abundant human and natural resources like oil, tin, limestone, bitumen, natural gas, good vegetation and climate which varies from being equatorial in the South, tropical in the centre and arid in the north. The three major national languages are Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa while English is the official language.

However, prolong military rule coupled with mismanagement and corruption, which have fully impoverished the people and made them “beggars” of a sort amidst plenty. This act of misrule has increased anti-social behaviour amongst the populace and the resultant effects are shared among all stakeholders in the country sadly the quest for material wealth at all cost has introduced a new dimension into the psyche of Nigerian (Human Trafficking)

To stem the rising tide in human trafficking in Nigeria, the government has set up the machinery and embarked on legislations while aligning with international protocols as both preventive and deterrent measures. In 2001, it ratified the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons especially women and children as well as passed a national law in 2003 – Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003. Through this act, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) was established (David – Odigie 2008) Nigeria is one of the few countries in Africa to have passed a national law against trafficking. Equally important the United National Convention on the right of a child (1989) defined a child as a young human being who is below 18years old, child right is a human right index in any society today.

Correspondingly, Article 24 of the international covenant on civil and political rights (1996, P.13) “states that every child shall have the rights to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor on the part of his family, society and the state”. This declaration is not worldwide people are traffic within and outside Nigeria for exploitation (UNICEF, 2006). This article aims to examine the situation in the Nigeria, identify specific responses that could be put in place to curtail the menace of trafficking.

Statement of Research Problem

Trafficking in human beings, especially women and girls is not new but in the context of globalization, it has acquired shocking new dimensions, it is a demand-driven global business with a huge market for cheap labour and commercial sex confronting often insufficient or unexercised policy framework or trained personnel to prevent it. Nigeria has acquired a reputation for being one of the leading Africa Countries in human trafficking with cross–border and internal trafficking. Trafficking of persons is the third largest crime military regimes in Nigeria have led to the institutionalized violation of human rights and severe political, social and economic crises. This negatively impacts affect the participation, especially of women and children. Poverty is the principal driving force behind this trade, propelling vulnerable people into the hands of traffickers, who belong to both small scale, local enterprises with extensive criminal networks and large scale multi-commodity business (UNESCO, 2006).

Nigeria ratified the UN Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children in 2001 and passed a national law against trafficking entitled “Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003:”, Nigeria is one of the few African Countries that passed such a law. Awareness-raising activities proved to be more vigorous, despite these initiatives, human trafficking remains a critical problem in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study adopts the Rational Choice Theory. This theory adopts a utilitarian belief that man is a reasoning actor who weighs means and ends, costs and benefits, and makes a rational choice. Cornish and Clarke (1986) see crime as an event that occurs when an offender decides to risk breaking the law after considering his or her own need for money, personal values or learning experiences and how well a target is protected, how affluent the neighbourhood is or how efficient the local police are. Before committing a crime, the reasoning criminal weighs the chances of getting caught, the severity of the expected penalty, the values to be gained by committing the act and his/her immediate need for that value. Keel (2007), in support of the rational choice theory, posits that people have the freedom to choose what behaviours they engage in and that they make those choices based on rational calculations.

The Rational Choice Theory of Cornish and Clarke (1986) was considered relevant to this study as it states that the offender risks breaking the law after considering his/her own need for money, personal values, learning experiences and how well a target is protected. Trafficking in women and children is an organized crime that involves a network of individuals, not a one-man affair. Those that engage in this crime must have resolved within themselves to engage in it, and to them, their decision is rational. Motivated by the need for money and social gain, the individual engages in learning the skills and techniques for the crime, and so to some extent, what the individual has learnt gives him confidence in his (rational) choice.

Sociological Perspective

This paper is presented from a sociological perspective. Our theoretical framework is derived from the conflict area of study. A close look at Nigeria's social setup shows clearly that the capitalist nature of the economy has led to the polarization of the society into two diametrically antagonistic classes: the haves and the have-nots. What is more, the government's economic policies tend to favour the dominant capitalist class leaving the majority in dire straits. The collapse of the oil boom in the late 1970s and the imposition of the Structural Adjustment Program, SAP, at the insistence of the Breton Woods Institutions led to trying times for the majority of Nigerians. SAP has led to a decline in the purchasing power of the Naira and low capacity utilization of industries which in turn contributed to a decline in per capita income and a collapse of social services (Lipede, 2007). Inequalities in rural and urban incomes widened over time. Food insecurity, the inability to meet basic needs like education, health care, etc., reflected the deepening poverty in rural communities. Flight to urban areas failed to bring the expected succour for job seekers as rising urban unemployment made

job seeking a fruitless exercise. Poverty and a lack of opportunities to improve people's social conditions lead to a general loss of confidence in the constituted authority and the subsequent rise in the rate of crimes such as armed robbery, prostitution, trafficking of women and drug trafficking, etc. Poverty manifested in illiteracy, unemployment and poor living standards occasioned by the failure of the government's socio-economic policies, therefore, appears to be at the heart of human trafficking.

Reasons for Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children

In Nigeria, persons are trafficked for prostitution, to work as domestic servants, bus conductors, and street traders. They are exploited in agricultural work, brass melting, stone digging, and scavenging among others.

Prostitution

Nigerian women and children are trafficked both internally and externally for sex. In the last decade, thousands of women and young girls were trafficked into the sex industry, especially into Europe, so that many people in Nigeria came to equate trafficking with prostitution alone and not with other forms of labour. Traffickers recruit girls from countryside markets, salons and other public places. Usually, such persons are instructed not to tell their parents that they are planning to travel out of the country. With the help of corrupt immigration officers, traffickers switch pages from stolen passports having valid visas with those of the trafficked persons, giving fake names, ages and other particulars. The trafficked persons are then coached to claim that they have been travelling in and out of the country, whereas they may never have even left their villages. Upon arriving at their destinations, they are deprived of their travel documents and made to sign agreements to pay back their Madams (Darnbazzau, 2007). In addition, before their travels or reaching their destinations trafficked persons' body parts such as pubic hairs, fingernails, menstrual flows, as well as underwear and photograph are taken from them and sent to Juju priests in Nigeria to ensure obedience. Many of the girls are also coerced with threats to kill their parents and other relatives if they do not cooperate (Adepoju, 2005).

Prostitution in Nigeria is perceived as an aberrant and immoral act and is considered a sin, especially according to the religious teachings of Islam and Christianity prevalent in the country. In the northern part of Nigeria, the penal code is fashioned along with Islamic laws and criminalizes prostitution (Nigerian Penal Code, Cap 345 of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990). In the southern part of Nigeria, the criminal code does not criminalize prostitution but does prohibit the operation of brothels and forbids anyone from living on the earnings of prostitutes (Criminal Code Act, Cap 77 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990).

Overall, the degree of tolerance of prostitution differs from community to community. For example, many communities in Edo State trivialize the issue. Trafficking for prostitution is only publicly recognized as an external phenomenon while internal trafficking for prostitution, which has been going on for decades, is not publicly recognized. The extensive literature on the trafficking of Nigerians for sex in Europe and the Middle East has drawn national and international attention to the issue. Interventions targeted at the known sources of recruitment, for trafficked persons often focus on Edo State, to the disadvantage of other parts of the country also implicated.

Domestic Help

Urban migration and poverty have saturated the labour market, especially the informal labour market, and led to the systematic reduction of the cost of labour. As a result, cheap labour in the informal sector, particularly domestic labour, grew as the economic crisis obliged every member of the family to work outside their homes to sustain family finances. The following narratives capture the experiences of trafficked children in Nigeria for domestic help as documented by UNESCO, 2006 research;

Elizabeth, a native of Benue State in the Middle Belt of Nigeria. Never had any form of education because her parents were poor. 11cr brother brought her to Lagos along with other girls for domestic service work. She is employed by a Madam to work in a food joint. With this “Madam “, she earns Naira 2, 000 (the US \$15) monthly. The money is kept by her brother for her father in Benue State, for the upkeep of the family.

Begging

Another type of trafficking in northern Nigeria is the trafficking for organized begging. Physically challenged or disabled persons, such as the blind and crippled, are lured into the begging business in major Nigerian cities, such as Lagos, Ibadan, Kano and Kaduna, and Abuja. Recently, this type of trafficking has spread beyond the country’s borders to the Middle East, in particular to Saudi Arabia. Contractual beggars are often adults of both sexes.

According to research conducted by Yakubu and UNESCO, (2004), physically challenged or handicapped persons are hired daily for begging assignments with a token fee of often no more than Naira 500 (some US \$3.8). There are rampant abuses involved with this kind of arrangement. The ‘investor’ only releases the trafficked person when he has made sufficient profit. The physically challenged are often carried on their back, in a wheel burrow or wheelchair and taken around town from sunrise to sunset, often under harsh weather and dangerous traffic conditions. Furthermore, experienced adult beggars traffic children under their

custody. These children are then compelled to lead the handicapped into organized begging. They are forced to do this for practically nothing or without any financial reward other than the daily meals that may be handed out to them along the streets. These trafficked children who lead beggars across the major cities of Nigeria are denied access to formal education and proper social upbringing in 1995, the Saudi Arabian authorities deported 18 Nigerian men for running a ring that trafficked women and beggars.

Baby Harvesting

According to UNESCO (2006), it was discovered that states like Abia, Ebonyi and Lagos, has many clinics and orphanages where doctors, nurses and orphanages caretakers “help” pregnant teenagers, and other women who do not want to keep their babies after birth. They care for these women during pregnancy and provide money and shelter. Upon delivery, the babies are sold to couples who pay a premium for the babies of their choice.

The young mothers are paid off after having signed papers repudiating their claims on the babies or swearing oaths of secrecy. Officials recently handled the case of two sisters who approached a doctor in Lagos with an offer to sell the unborn child of one of the sisters. They demanded N 500,000 (about US \$3875) and N 300,000 (about US \$ 2325) for a baby boy and baby girl respectively. Later they raised the price of a baby girl to N 400,000 (about US \$3100) because of “the rising cost of living.” Another case was that of the Good Shepherd Orphanage in Lagos which was reported to be engaged in illegal adoption of babies as well as sheltering young pregnant girls and selling off their babies at birth. Many of these babies sold cannot be traced and one cannot determine what became of them (www.unesdoc.unesco.org/irnages/0014).

Poverty

Poverty is a major factor responsible for child trafficking in Nigeria. It cannot be denied that abject poverty, unpleasant economic environment, unemployment, massive retrenchments, underemployment and poor quality of life has made parents who would otherwise, have been most caring and loving, neglect and even sometimes, abuse their children. Some families are living from hand to mouth as a result of insufficient income to cater for their families. They are out of a job or business either as a result of retirement or insufficiency of the income to settle the children school fees, rents and feeding. That is a perfect situation for parents and children to fall victim to bogus promises of a good time abroad with the prospect of earning foreign exchange that will convert into tons of naira (Nigerian currency) back home in Nigeria (Monica, 2010). Although Nigeria has enormous natural and human resources as well as the largest oil producer in Africa and the eleventh largest in the world(Mina,2013), it is rated as one of the poorest countries

in the world with a GDP per capita of about US \$1,000 for a population of about 150 Million. With about two-thirds of its population living in rural areas without basic social amenities such as electricity, road, hospital, schools, good drinking water etc and earning less than \$1 per day (Kaushik, 1999). There is massive youth unemployment and a general lack of opportunities for economic ventures, low standards of living and devalued local currencies; these results in the failure to meet the health, food, housing and security needs of the people.

It has been observed that population living in political and economic instability often seek to migrate elsewhere in search of better opportunities. The destination of that migration is usually into bigger cities. The rural areas of Nigeria, where the bulk of the population resides, are not industrialized and characterized by lack of electricity, access road, hospitals and insecurity caused by the Boko Haram Islamic Sect among others. There are few job opportunities or institutions of higher learning. Consequently, even when the children do receive some education up to secondary school, there are no jobs at the end of their schooling nor additional institutions for them to attend. The economic situation is such that most parents are unable to care for and properly feed their families. Parents subject their children to various forms of labour, including trafficking for economic gains. It is also submitted that poverty has a hand in child prostitution and sexual abuse.

In Nigeria, it can't be denied that some female children that are engaged in child labour such as hawking, domestic servant are sexually abused. The women unit of the Federal Ministry of Education portrayed the situation, thus, a report in the magazine 'Ladies Home Journal' estimates that sexual abuse of young girls is four times commoner than the rape of adult women. The abuser is likely to persuade and pressurize the child, using all built-in authority of an older person. Children who hawk wares for their parents fall easy victims. They are coerced or bought with gifts. They are thereby prevented from telling their parents or even close friends about the incident. When parents are financially incapacitated to provide the necessities of life such as a comfortable house, food, clothes and sound education for their children, the children are sent into the labour market.

Unemployment

Lack of employment is one of the greatest factors which force many people in Nigeria to pursue insecure and unreliable employment in other places. Somebody who has no economic resources can easily be lured by the dream of a better livelihood and may easily be trapped by traffickers. Unaware of the possible consequences such people will often consent to travel through undocumented migration routes to affluent cities and countries and are in the process caught up either domestic or International child trafficking. Unemployment in Nigeria has

always been high. Every year many young people graduate from secondary and high school institutions with no employment. After years of working the street in search of non-existent jobs, they are ready to go anywhere to do anything, just as long as they can be gainfully employed. The negative impact of unemployment is far worse for those young Nigerians who have or no academic qualification (Nigeria child Rights Act, 2013).

Broken Home

A broken home is a serious and recurrent issue emanating from the home environment and as well, facilitates the trafficking of children in contemporary societies like Nigeria. Thus, the issue nowadays requires much attention and further investigation to tackle the escalation of child trafficking and the vulnerability of children to trafficking in society. Profiles of trafficked children interviewed revealed that most of the trafficked children were products of broken homes and/or orphaned children (Ofuoku, 2010). An estimate reveals that from the Northern part of Nigeria alone, about 9.5 million children; who are between the ages of 6 to 15, and who are mostly orphans and are not exposed to western education, are said to have been trafficked from one place to another. Broken homes and lack of a fixed place of abode always make children vulnerable to traffickers. In the past, parents cared for their children regardless of marital status. However, today, many parents abandon their children when the marriage ends in separation. The divorce of the child's parents and the broken home environment are contributory factors to child trafficking. In some polygamous family, where a husband takes another wife, some stepwives are cruel to children of the estranged or former wife and would not hesitate to abuse such children (Ofuoku, 2010)

Measures taken by Nigeria Government to fight Child Trafficking

Apart from the fact that Nigeria is a member and signatory to many International Labour Organization (ILO) instruments, and has adopted Convention 182 on the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, there are existing laws in Nigeria that are supposed to protect children from trafficking, such as the Child's Right Act of 2003, Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003, the Children and Young Persons Act 1959, the Immigration Act 1990, the criminal code 1916 and the penal code 1960 respectively. These laws jointly prohibit child trafficking; despite these greatly increased legislative and policy attention by Government, it still appears to be making very little impact on the scourge of child trafficking in Nigeria.

The effect of child trafficking on the social and economic development of the Nigerian state and people cannot be overemphasized. Child trafficking has proved to be a serious problem to the Nigerian nation and has evaded all attempts by government and even international organizations and partners to bring it to

an end. Howsoever difficult it may seem, however, there is the urgent need to put an end to the scourge of child trafficking in Nigeria to safeguard the future of the Nigerian child and the country at large.

In tackling the menace of child trafficking in Nigeria, the government has made efforts at promulgating laws that will help bring the problem to a conclusive end. These laws as enumerated above, have in various ways attempted to legally address the problem of child trafficking in Nigeria by criminalizing child trafficking in all its ramifications. From the early days of the general criminal laws like the criminal code (apply in the southern part), penal code (apply in the northern part), children and young persons' Act, up to the more specific laws under the NAPTIP Act which specifically aims at criminalizing human trafficking, the aim has been the same: putting an end to the menace of child and human trafficking.

Curtailing the menace to Human Trafficking in Nigeria

The essence of every Government is to safeguard life and properties of its citizens. The following measures must be in places like establishing a partnership with Non-Governmental Organizations with a wealth of knowledge on child traffickings such as the International Labour Office and United Nations Children Funds, ensure full domestication and enforcement of all international treaties on child protection signed by Nigeria (UNESCO, 2006).

Furthermore, Adesina, (2014,) recommended the involvement of indigenous Non-Governmental Organizations such as the "National Council of Women Societies, Women Consortium of Nigeria FIDA and WOTCLEF" in any program toward eliminating child trafficking. Equally important, Kazeem, (2009) opined that government must pay attention to those who are patronizing prostitutes and those who promote the institution. There is a need for government to research to quantify the extent of child trafficking within and outside the country, know the number of Nigerians involved (Mahmoud and Trebesch, 2010; Adesina, 2014). Similarly, Nigerian authorities should recognize baby factories as a route of child trafficking as well as criminalizing tourism for a sexual purpose in the country (Makinde, 2015; Willis and Levy, 2002). Furthermore, empowering people economically, authorize the agency charged with the responsibility of protecting people against trafficking like the National Agency for the Protection of Trafficking in Persons with independent judicial autonomy to prosecute any person found guilty (Ojuoku, 2010). Other measures involved providing support to victims regarding reintegration into the society, establish national abuse hotlines so that people can report early for intervention as well as the provision of sound education which should be free and compulsory for every Nigerian child (Kazeem, 2009; Ojuoko, 2010). Also, there is a need for

government to come up with a designed system for surveillance and coordinating the health of trafficked victims (Adesina, 2014; Willis and Levy, 2002).

To overcome the new abuse structure of baby factories that promotes infant trafficking in Nigeria, the government should develop a child adoption policy within and outside the country (Omeire et al., 2015; Makinde, 2015; Makinde et al., 2015). Alternatively, increasing access to education as well as providing subsidies to families with poor economic status will help reduce abuse in the household. As a strategy for mitigating the occurrence of child trafficking in our communities, Willis, and Levy (2002) proposed the use of the "PREVENT" model whose acronym stands for Psychological Counseling, Reproductive health services, Education, Vaccine, Nutrition, and Treatment, which should be adopted and implemented by Nigerian Government.

According to United Nations Children Fund (2007), only 15 states out of 36 promulgated the children's right act in Nigeria, hence the need to ensure full implementation in all states of the federation and the expectation is for the federal authority to intervene. Another means of creating awareness among youths is by establishing clubs in schools against trafficking to educate them on necessary protective measures as well as increasing funding to National Agency for the Protection of Trafficking in Persons (Adesina, 2014). Another important step as identified by Turner (2010) is to prescribe strong punishments against child traffickers and ensure its implementation at federal, state and local government levels.

As citizens, there are lots of actions to be taken in addressing this pressing social issue which involved; becoming more informed about trafficking and its consequences, reporting any suspected case to the authorities' concern, Support Government and other organizations willing to eliminate this harmful practice (Salihu and Ajio, 2009; Willis and Levy, 2002). The public must have a pressurized Government to recognized baby factories as routes of trafficking thus abolishing them. They must as well stop stigmatizing all girls with unwanted pregnancies as well as advocating for laws that can address issues of surrogacy and assisted reproduction in Nigeria (Makinde et al., 2015). People must change their attitudes toward infertility by accommodating infertile couples as people with hope and aspirations, thus supporting them emotionally.

Conclusion

Human Trafficking has been identified as both a crime and disease which have eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society with diverse consequences both on the victim and the society at large. This is despite numerous institutional and policies framework put in place by the Nigerian government to fight the menace.

The article was able to identify the growth rate of Human Trafficking (women and child) is not because the government is lacking in its responsibilities in addressing the menace but these efforts are restricted towards prosecution and rehabilitation of victims thereby neglecting to address the root causes of Human Trafficking.

To effectively fight this menace in Nigeria, the government must extend measures put in place to fight trafficking beyond the prosecution of traffickers and rehabilitation of trafficked victims to include a concrete and practical step towards napping the root causes of human trafficking from the bud.

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