Human Trafficking In Nigeria: Implications to National Development

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Abstract

Human trafficking has generated serious attention in the last two decades worldwide. This is not unconnected to the fact that it has become a global menace. Several international, regional and national treaties and conventions have been adopted to end this inhuman trade. Nigeria has been identified as a source, transit and destination country for human trafficking. This paper examines the causes of human trafficking in Nigeria and its implications on national development. It also examines the international, regional and global responses to human trafficking. The study recommends that the government should empower Nigerian women as a way of reducing their vulnerability to this trade. The government should build capacities and also make sufficient budgetary allocation to the agencies that are involved in apprehending human traffickers and those that are responsible for the rehabilitation of their victims

Keywords: Gender, Human Trafficking, Menace, International Organizations, National Development

Introduction

Human Trafficking, according to the United Nations (2000), is the transportation, keeping in one's possession or reception of persons by means of coercion or craftiness or by giving or accepting money to have control or influence over another in order to draw an illegitimate profit from them. Human Trafficking is also the buying and selling of persons for the single purpose of exploiting the individuals. Traffickers use lies, coercion, confinement, debt bondage, starvation of food, beating, rape and deceit to control their victims and make them carry out their wishes and command. The main goal of human traffickers is the exploitation of their victims to their own advantage. Human Traffickers use men, women, and children for multifarious purposes. Children are used for cheap labour to work in factories or for domestic servitude. Men are trafficked so as to be used for hard labour, to work in mines or factories for stipends whereas women/girls are majorly trafficked to be used as sex slaves or for domestic servitude. Human trafficking has become a global menace exacerbated by poverty and greed. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that there are 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally (Polaris, 2008). Traffickers can be friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. People can be recruited into trafficking through fake newspaper adverts, fake recruitment agencies, abduction, word of mouth, through phones, internet, malls and through deceit. Human trafficking is noted to be the third largest international crime industry just behind illegal drugs and arms trafficking (Enaikele and Olutayo, 2011). ILO report cited in Human Trafficking by the Numbers (2017) observes that human trafficking is a lucrative business making a profit of about 150 million dollars yearly. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Global report on Human Trafficking observes from data gathered from 155 countries that sexual exploitation is the most common identified form of human trafficking (79%) followed by forced labour (18%) (UNODC Report, 2018). Also, Smith (2011) observes that 21 million women/girls are trafficked worldwide.

Abdurahman (2008) as cited in Onoiribholo (2008) submits that the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) named Nigeria among the eight countries considered the highest in human trafficking in the world. Nigeria was mentioned as being behind the following countries: Thailand, China, Albania, Bulgaria, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. Indeed Mashi (2007) maintains that (between March 2002 and April 2004,) no fewer than 9,925 Nigerian women and 1,231 underaged girls were deported from Saudi Arabia alone. National Development can be defined as the advancement or growth of different facets of a nation. It entails the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material advancement or growth of a nation. It is an all-encompassing or all round development of a nation. Chrisma (1984) rightly maintains that National Development is not only

an economic exercise but advancement or growth in both socio – economic and political issues and permeates all aspects of societal life. Nigeria got independence in 1960. Since then, Nigeria has made a various concerted effort in search of development. Nigeria formulated four National Development Plans. The National Development Plan (1962), the Second National Development Plan (1970 – 74), Third National Development Plan (1975 - 80) and Fourth National Development (1981 - 85). The Nigerian government has also introduced other economic reforms or strategies such as Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Vision 20:20:20, etc. All these reforms were to improve the standard of living of the citizens which is one of the primary responsibilities of government. All these programs failed to achieve their laudable objectives. This is evident from dilapidated infrastructures in the country, a high level of unemployment, a high rate of poverty, low per capita income and high debt rate that pervade the country. This is despite the huge financial commitments to these programs. Human trafficking is sabotage on government development strategies. It undermines the morality of any nation and does not in any way encourage national development. This study analyses human trafficking in Nigeria, the causes and it's implication to national development. The study also identifies global and national intervention strategies to curb this menace. It also recommends ways to eliminate this illicit trade. Data were derived from primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data was derived through objective and unbiased observation of human trafficking in Nigeria while secondary data were derived through textbooks, newspapers, magazines, official bulletins, and internet services.

Human Trafficking in Nigeria

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimate, 10% of those forced into sex work in Western Europe are women from West Africa, and a good number of them are Nigerians (UNODC, 2012). The debasement of women in West Africa including Nigeria makes women be vulnerable to traffickers. Women are perceived to be inferior to men, thereby encouraging gender discrimination. Families prefer to invest more in their male children even to the detriment of their female children. This has encouraged low school enrolment for girls. Women/ girls low education often subjects them to lowly paid jobs, and this makes them be susceptible to human traffickers. They are, therefore, ready to do anything to escape poverty and lack. Even in the household, when there are dwindling resources, women are left to become "heads" and therefore assume the role of breadwinners. This also makes them be vulnerable to traffickers. The high unemployment rate, low status of Nigerian women and the predominance of women in small scale informal sectors have fuelled women vulnerability to the illicit trade. Enaikele and Olutayo (2011) rightly posit that trafficking is majorly a gender biased phenomenon since most of their victims are women and girls. Human trafficking is noted to be the only crime where women dominate as the victims, perpetrators, and advocates against the crime at the same time. Human trafficking victims are subjected to risks which include: contacting HIV/AIDS, developing depression, suicidal tendencies, post-traumatic stress syndrome, drug and alcohol addiction, and sterility. In Nigeria, two types of human trafficking exist, and they include internal and external trafficking. Internal trafficking is the trafficking of persons within the Nigerian borders. Example, when people are trafficked from rural to urban areas or from one state to the other. External Trafficking is the trafficking of persons outside the national borders. Example, when persons are trafficked from Nigeria to another country (ies). West African destinations for trafficked Nigerians are usually Togo, Cote d'ivore, Benin Republic, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon. Their prominent Europe destinations include Italy, Germany, Venezuela, Belgium, U.K and Netherlands. All states are involved in human trafficking, but some states are noted as suppliers of trafficked persons. The states include Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Delta, Ebonyi, Imo, Delta, Lagos, Oyo, Ogun and Kano (Essien, 2013). Traffickers use threats, use of force and the pretense that their victims are indebted to them to control their victims and make them carry out their wishes or command. Nigerian traffickers make a high profit and face a low risk of prosecution. They take advantage of the corrupt judicial system, corrupt immigration, and police officers to perpetuate the trade. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2012) submits that countries are usually unwilling to convict traffickers. They noted that two out of

five countries covered by the UNODC report did not record a single conviction despite the fact that the number of convictions for human trafficking is increasing.

Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

One of the causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria is poverty. The absence of jobs, social infrastructures and lack of prospect in the rural areas make rural dwellers to give their children to anyone who promise to give them any type of job or a better life. Most times these children go through both physical and sexual exploitation when they get to their destinations. Traffickers explore means such as threats, violence, deceit, and seizing of passports to force their victims to render services. The former Director General of NAPTIP, Mrs. Julie Okah-Donli cited in Ezeamala (2018) argues that greed rather than poverty and unemployment is the real cause of human trafficking. Arguing further, she opines that some victims sell their father's houses and pay money to traffickers who usually promise them lucrative jobs abroad. She also maintains that, if not for greed they could easily invest such money in some business ventures in Nigeria which could have yielded some good money.

Corrupt practices by the immigration and police officers have also fueled the spate of this trade. These officers have been given the mandate to clamp down on these traffickers, but they prefer to collect bribes and allow the business to continue to grow. The trade enjoys low risk, and high profit and these have aided its proliferation.

The weak legal system, the absence of the rule of law and lack of political will have also encouraged the growth of this trade. The absence of the rule of law in the country encourages people's right to be abused with impunity. Even when laws exist to punish offenders, there is usually a lack of political will to implement such laws.

Internal armed conflict has also encouraged human trafficking in Nigeria. For instance, Boko Haram insurgency has encouraged a massive displacement of people and has also led to the death of many. Governor Kashim Shettima of Borno State observes that about two million, one hundred and fourteen thousand persons have been internally displaced in Nigeria as at December 2016 and that in Borno State alone, they have an official record of 52, 311 children who became orphans through Boko Haram insurgency (Tukur, 2017). These orphans are vulnerable and helpless since they do not have parents that could take care of them and can be easily lured to become victims of human trafficking.

Influence of peer pressure is another reason for the growth of this trade. Youths can easily be influenced by their friends who are in the cities. Their friends who have been to the cities tell them how beautiful cities could be and the good life that can be obtained therein. These youths are therefore ready to live in the cities at all cost and are therefore susceptible to human traffickers.

Globalization has also encouraged human trafficking. People, through the internet, have fallen victims to fraudsters who promise them lucrative jobs in Europe if they can travel down. These victims are usually disappointed when they arrive at the agreed destinations. They usually discover that the "good jobs" promised them is prostitution.

Legal Instruments and Conventions against Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is a global menace. The International Community has beamed searchlights on ways of combating this trade. Many International, regional and national treaties, laws and conventions have been enacted to put a stop to the trade, some of them include

International Responses:

The United Nations Convention on the Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10th December 1948. This convention came about as a result of events

following the World Wars I and II. For the first time, countries of the world came together and acceded on a comprehensive statement of inalienable human rights. It declares that human rights should be enjoyed by all, despite one's race or place of abode. The declaration precludes all forms of human rights, such as civil and political rights, economic, social and cultural rights. Other rights highlighted include the right to life, liberty, speech and privacy and freedom from torture or inhuman treatment. Though this convention is not binding to countries, it has helped to shape many constitutions in the world today including the Nigerian constitution and both regional and international laws. Some provisions of the convention were detailed in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, The United Nations Convention against Torture, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, etc.

The United Nations Convention on The Rights of The Child (UNCRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20th November 1989. It establishes the civil, political, social, health and cultural rights of a child. It further stipulates the needs and rights of a child. The convention recognizes among other things, the right of a child to life, to express his/her opinion and such opinion to be acted upon, a child's right to be protected from all forms of abuse and the best interest of a child should be given the greatest consideration in all actions concerning a child. The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol) was adopted on 15th December 2000, and it became effective on 29th September 2003. The protocol already has 189 parties as at 26th July 2018 (UNODC, 2018). It has three supplementary protocols; they are (i) The Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons; especially women and children. This protocol, among other things, seeks to put an end to human trafficking by ensuring that State parties take measures that will dissuade the flourishing of the trade including enactment of domestic laws. The protocol also seeks that state parties should punish traffic offenders, protect their victims and also provide provisions to assist victims to be reintegrated into society. They should also criminalize the trade and take measures to reinforce the effectiveness of border controls. It also helps state parties to draft laws, create strategies that will help clamp down traffickers and also help in providing resources for the implementation of the laws. (ii) The second protocol is the protocol against smuggling migrants by land, sea, and air. The protocol became effective on 28th January 2004. (iii) And the protocol against the manufacturing and trafficking of firearms.

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. It is also known as the Bill of Rights for Women. The convention enjoins state parties to integrate gender equality into their domestic laws and abolish discriminating laws against women and enact laws that will protect women from discrimination. States are also required to guarantee women's basic rights and freedom on the basis of equality with men among other things (UN Women, 2007).

Some Regional Conventions include:

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Right of Women in Africa .Though women's rights have been guaranteed in many international instruments, African women continue to suffer various forms of abuse. The protocol elaborates the rights of African women. The protocol seeks among other things, to uphold the dignity of African women and eliminate all forms of discrimination and harmful practices against women. The protocol also seeks to uphold women's right to education and training, right to inheritance and widows' right, etc. The protocol recognizes the vital roles of African women play in the development process and aims to integrate them into the development process (Maputo Protocol, 1995).

ECOWAS Declaration on the Fight against Trafficking in Persons: This declaration was adopted in Dakar, Senegal On December 2001. The document embodies all the measures taken by the Head of State and Government of all Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) member states to prevent, suppress and punish human traffickers in their respective states. The declaration seeks among other things to take measures to establish comprehensive policies and programmes to put an end to human trafficking in West Africa

National Response to Human Trafficking includes:

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted on 18th December 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, but it entered into force as an international treaty on 3rd September 1981 ((Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2013). But it was not until 1985 that the Nigerian government ratified it without reservations and became a state party to it. The convention seeks among other things, for the respect and observance of the human rights of women. It also seeks measures to address the challenges faced by women. The Nigerian constitution was adopted in 1999. Some of its provisions were influenced by the United Nations Convention on the Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Some of these provisions include (i) Respect for the dignity of labour (ii) No person shall be subjected to forced labour (iii) No person shall be held as a slave. Nigeria became the first African country to enact an anti – trafficking legislation in 2003 known as the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act. This Act was amended in 2005 so as to strengthen its provisions. In 2015, the Act was revoked and The Trafficking in Persons Prohibition, Enforcement and Administration Act was put in place to strengthen their institutional framework further. This Act established The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) (The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, 2003). It was established in line with the country's international obligation under the Trafficking in Persons Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish human traffickers. This agency seeks among other things to (i) strengthen and enhance the ability of the law enforcement agencies to successfully prosecute human traffickers. (ii) To educate the public through the media on the dangers and consequences of trafficking. (iii) To implement all international treaties ratified by Nigeria. (iv) To encourage the protection and rehabilitation of victims. (v) To investigate all forms of trafficking. The Nigerian government also adopted The Child Rights Acts in 2003. This is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (UNCRC) of 1989. The Act recognizes children and serves to protect the rights and responsibilities of the Nigerian child. Such rights include, right to survival and development, freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, right to dignity of the child, right to free compulsory and universal primary education and right to parental care, protection and maintenance (Akinlami, 2013). The Act further seeks to protect children from child marriage, exploitative labour, use of children in criminal activities and abduction.

Implications of Human Trafficking to National Development

National Development as mentioned earlier is the advancement or growth of different facets of a nation. It entails the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific and material advancement of a nation. Human Trafficking does not in any way encourage national development. Human Trafficking can lead to the decimation of the citizens of the country. Victims of human trafficking are susceptible to an untimely death due to the inhuman treatments that are meted out to them. Also, a situation where able bodied men and women are trafficked outside the country will leave the country with old people who are not very productive. This will invariably lead to a shortage of local labour in the country. The country will therefore not be availed of the services of these youth. And this has grave consequences for the nation. Oluwaleye (2017:2211) noted that the effects of child labour transcend individual, family and societal and goes a long way to impact national development. The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) cited in Adaramola (2016) notes that about 1million Nigerians are trafficked annually. The youths are supposed to be the future leaders and also the labour force who should be used for revitalizing of the economy of the nation. Some of these trafficked victims are used as either domestic servants or to hawk on the streets denying them of education which should be a basic right of a Nigerian child according to the Child Right Act (2003). An ILO/IPEC report cited in (The Nigerian Voice, 15th August 2013) notes that 40% of Nigerian street children and hawkers are trafficked persons. Also, just before June 11th, 2017 World Day Against Child Labour, International Labour Organization (ILO) maintains that there exist over 168 million children in child labour across the world, including Nigeria (Yong, 2017). These are children who should be in their various schools but are always on the streets hawking. This portrays a danger to the future of the nation since children are the future leaders and therefore should be given the opportunity to acquire education. Education can help to

secure their tomorrow. Also, the trauma that these children go through can have a negative impact on their emotional, physical and overall psychological development. This can create serious implications for their ability to contribute to the economic growth of the nation.

Human trafficking has contributed to the increase of people living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria. Indeed, the Chairman of NAPTIP, Kano State zone Ahmed M. Bello cited in Yunus and Rabiu (2016) submits that over 60% of victims of human trafficking repatriated into the country tested HIV positive. This has negative effects on the women who are disproportionately represented among the victims of human trafficking. This can rob the society of their huge contributions to the task of nation building. Women are noted as nation builders and great partners with men in the task of economic development and nation building. Their great contributions to development processes are gradually becoming visible and acknowledged worldwide. This disease can indeed affect women's disposition or contribution to the nation's growth. It can also burden public health and put pressure on budgetary allocation to health facilities in the country. Human trafficking has also turned many Nigerian children to orphans. Corroborating this stance, Kwara State Ministry of Health Coordinator for HIV/AIDS, Salimot Lawal cited in Premium Times 18th April 2013 estimates that there are 1,800,000 Aids orphans living in Nigeria. These children become vulnerable to traffickers since they do not have somebody that could send them to school. They will also lack good home training and the ability to develop themselves. These children can later on turn to armed robbers, kidnappers, internet fraudsters, etc. since they cannot be able to get meaningful employment as a result of their inability to develop themselves. This can lead to an increase in the crime rate and invariably lead to the sabotage of the government's efforts to put the country on the path of progress. Some of these victims of human trafficking especially men/boys are made to work in factories or industries and are paid peanuts for rendering their services. This has encouraged unemployment whereby graduates cannot get gainful employment. This has also encouraged low per capita income and has in no small way impacted negatively on national development. Some of the survivors of this inhuman trade go through lots of health hazards which include Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Stockholm syndrome, mental disorder, depression, suicidal ideation, substance abuse and malnutrition (Charteris, German, Hansrani, Li, Merchant, 2018). The impact of this trade on their health can impede on their ability to contribute their own quota to the national development. Human trafficking renders national borders porous and is a threat to national security. A situation where people surreptitiously enter a state to conduct illegal businesses frequently can encourage their borders to become porous and accessible to terrorists. This can pose a threat to people's lives and properties and in no small way undermine national development. Worst still, human trafficking can lead to the perpetuation of the cycle of poverty and other attendants evils, as failure to put an end to the degrading activities can enhance its passing on to coming generations.

Conclusion

Human trafficking has been attributed to poverty, corrupt practices by immigration and police officers, the weak legal system, internal armed conflicts, the influence of peer groups and globalization. Human trafficking debases a country's image. It subverts the developmental efforts of the government. It impacts the political, economic, social, scientific and material development of a nation. There is a need for countries to be committed to putting an end to this inhuman trade.

Recommendations

- Government, Non-Governmental Organisations and Societies should create awareness through seminars, conferences, workshop, and various media to sensitise people on the strategies and consequences of human trafficking.
- The government should make concerted efforts to empower women educationally, socially and economically. This is because women are vulnerable to traffickers as a result of cultural inhibitions which have continued to inhibit their access to opportunities

- Stiff penalties should be meted out for the perpetrators of this illicit trade. This can serve as a deterrent to those who would want to join the trade
- The government should create jobs and offer youths' gainful employment. This is as a way to discourage them from becoming victims of fraudulent recruitment agencies who deceive them by promising them good jobs that do not actually exist
- The government should build capacities and also make sufficient budgetary allocation to the agencies that are involved in apprehending human traffickers and those that are responsible for the rehabilitation of their victims
- There should be international corroboration between source, transit, and destination countries. This will encourage quicker apprehension and prosecution of human traffickers
- There should be an increased awareness of available economic opportunities. This will encourage youths to be aware and also access gainful employment
- Government through National Orientation Agencies should enlighten people on the need to shun excessive materialism which can make them fall prey to the antics of human traffickers

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