

Cross Border Human Trafficking and Its Effect on Nigeria's National Image

Chinemerem Winifred Ojiego

Department of History, International Studies and Diplomacy, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu State, Nigeria.

Abstract - Human trafficking is regarded as modern day slavery. The phenomenon has generated a lot of attention among local and international communities. The menace has become a lucrative criminal business and Nigeria has acquired a reputation for being one of the leading African countries in human trafficking with cross-border and internal trafficking. This study examined the effects of human trafficking on Nigeria's national image. The study adopted political economy theory as enunciated by Karl Marx as its theoretical framework, given the fact that the approach stated that while crime increase in the society is because of the unjust conditions in the society. This research adopted ex-post-facto research design and data was generated through secondary sources. At the end of the investigation, it was discovered that human trafficking has flourished due to the lackluster attitude of law enforcement and a weak legal framework thus, creates bad image for Nigeria. The researcher recommended that the government should provide employment opportunities for youths, and create an encouraging environment for the private sectors to invest.

Keywords: Human, Trafficking, Nigeria, National Image, Cross Border.

I. INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is mostly recognized as modern day slavery and as such it is not historically new. The issue of human cross border trafficking is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon involving multiple stakeholders at the institutional and commercial level. Human trafficking is a demand-driven global business with a huge market for cheap labour which is often confronted with insufficient or unexercised policy framework or trained personnel to prevent it. Virtually no country in Africa is immune from trafficking. These countries are all affected as either countries of source, destination, transit or a combination of all three. Trafficking of persons is the third largest crime after arms trade and drug trade and it comes in many forms; of sexual exploitation, forced labour and organ harvesting. (UNESCO, 2006)

Nigeria acts as a source, transit and destination country for trafficking men, women and children to Europe, the Middle East and other countries (Mashil, 2005). Nigeria also has acquired a reputation for being one of the leading African countries in human trafficking with cross border and internal trafficking. The Nigerian women, men and children are taken from Nigeria to other countries and there, they are subjected to hazardous jobs. UNESCO (2006) report noted that the decades of military regimes in Nigeria have led to the institutionalized violation of human rights and severe

political, social and economic crises and this has impacted negatively to the development of community participation, especially of women and children despite international institution designed to advance their causes. In addition, the oil boom in the 1970s in Nigeria created opportunities for migration both inside and outside of the country thereby creating avenue for exploitation, for institutional trafficking in women and Children, for forced labour and for prostitution.

With the return to civilian rule in 1999, expectations were that the problem of human right abuse of which trafficking in human is but an extreme form would be greatly reduced, if not eliminated. And in keeping with this expectation, Nigeria under the new civilian administration ratified the United Nations protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially for women and children in 2001 and passed a national law against trafficking entitled in persons (prohibition) law enforcement and administration Act 2003 making Nigeria one of only a few African countries that passed such law at the time. Nigeria also passed the child rights Act in 2003, which deals comprehensively with the issue of child trafficking. Also at the non-governmental levels, Nigerian Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) has also been actively involved in effort to combat human trafficking. Some NGOs which have been prominent in this regard include the National Council of Women Societies (NGOs), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) among others. The activities of these NGOs have gone a long way in exposing the various dimensions of the victims but despite these initiatives, human trafficking remains a critical problem in Nigeria thus, paints a bad picture of Nigeria in the international community.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

II.1 Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Although human trafficking has become a global problem, nevertheless, African countries (including Nigeria) serve as major sources of trafficked persons. According to the report which the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) presented to the Conference of African Ministers in Benin Republic in 2004, human trafficking is prominent in 53 African countries. The report revealed that 89 percent of the 53 nations involved had been trafficking human beings to and from neighbouring countries, but an appreciable volume of the traffic flows to Europe. Akaigwe, 2004 cited in Njoku

(2005). The African children were said to be “the biggest victims of the complex phenomenon, and are twice as likely to be trafficked as women”. Some are engaged as child soldiers in war-torn African countries, while many others work as domestic servants, farm labourers or sold into prostitution. Awake (June 22, 2002) observed that most ‘modern-day slaves’ are often women and children. The paper noted that they toil against their will either as child labourers or even prostitutes. For instance, the report on child labour released in 2008 showed that an estimated 284,000 child labourers existed in West Africa and many of them worked in coca farms on slave labour wages or for nothing in order to put chocolate into the mouths of consumers (The Punch, February 20, 2008).

In Nigeria specifically, human trafficking involving women and children has been going on in several locations and communities. The report on Trafficking in Persons, 2004 cited in Maduagwu (2004) described Nigeria as a source, transit and destination country for trafficked women and children. The report noted that Nigerians were trafficked to Europe, the Middle East and other countries for purpose of forced labour, domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. It also described Nigeria as a destination country for Togolese, Beninese, Ghanaian and Cameroonian children trafficked for forced labour (Maduagwu, 2004). A report on human trafficking and migration to Europe shows that in 2014, 170, 100 arrived Italy by sea, compared to 141, 484 migrants that were ferried through the Mediterranean Sea from Libya in 2013. According to the report, the migrants had come from Syria (42, 323), Eritrea (34, 329), Mali (9,908) Nigeria (9,000), Gambia (8,691), Somalia (5,756) and some other nations (4,095). Among the migrants, 64, 625 were said to have applied for asylum (Ojugbana, 2015:29). In the case of Nigeria, most of the migrants were victims of human trafficking hoodwinked by syndicates as a result of their desperation to travel to Europe or Asia for a better life.

Thus, human trafficking is a complex phenomenon of which many people are involved at both family and community levels, as well as at the border or international transactions. The Guardian Opinion (June 29, 2004) observed that Nigeria is a well-known player in human trafficking. According to the paper, the country serves as “a base camp and transit channel for traffickers and their human commodity”. The paper also noted that inside the country and at border areas some locations are known to be target spots for operations.

In a similar view, Oloko cited in Okpalakunne (2006) explained that child trafficking consists of both national and trans-national recruitment and movement of children for the purpose of providing cheap, manipulatable and exploitable labour for domestic and agricultural work, commercial sex work or prostitution, begging, unregulated industrial work and street trading.

It was as a result of the menace of human trafficking in Nigeria and its increasing damage to the nation’s image

abroad that some anti-human trafficking organizations were formed by some patriotic individuals to stem the ugly tide. Among these organizations the most influential, powerful and well focused was the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF) founded by Mrs. Amina Titi Abubakar, wife of former Vice President of Nigeria, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar. WOTCLEF initiated and sponsored the Anti-Human Trafficking and Child Labour bill which was passed by the National Assembly and subsequently signed into law by the former President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on July 14, 2003 (Njoku, 2005). The legislation (Act) provided for the establishment of the National Enforcement and Administration to be known as National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP). It gave the agency sweeping powers to initiate prosecution of barons or syndicates of the illicit trade.

In 2005 the NAPTIP Act was amended which criminalized the keeping of brothels and the use of children as domestic house helps. The properties of the offenders of this amended act have become targets for seizure by government (Olayinka, 2011).

Moreover, the Federal Government has encouraged NAPTIP to establish a National Investigation Task Force (NITF). The NITF has been upgraded to effective coordinating offices in many states of the federation particularly in states with worst human trafficking problems. NAPTIP has also established shelters where victims of human trafficking are taken care of during rescue and rehabilitation period. Those shelters exist in zonal offices located in Lagos, Kano, Benin, Enugu, Uyo, Sokoto and Maiduguri (Olayinka, 2011).

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the political economy theory, propounded by Karl Marx. According to him the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle, the Marxian approach emphasizes on collectivities such as social classes, the whole society and economy, the structure that compose these and the dynamic factors associated with these structures. Marxian political economy locates the principal source of crime in the ordinary operation of the day to day of the political economy of a society.

In privatized societies oriented to accumulation and with no dependable relationship to the means of distribution. One can be sure crime is high among rich and poor alike, when people are seen as stratified in system of high and low social honor. One can be sure that the persons at the lower end of the systems will be victims of a wide variety of crime and victimize each other.

Furthermore, there are low crime societies with all the factors currently used to explain high crime rates, differentiation, association, labeling process, few control, ethnic diversity, secularized, industrialized, densely population and genetically diverse. The political economy approach tries to point out

why there is persistent crime in the society and the behaviour that is uniquely associated with it.

Moreover, the Marxist political economy approach stated that while crime increase in the society is because of the unjust conditions in the society. The central organizing principles of the Marxist theory is that why criminal behaviour exists in the society is because of the existence of class difference in the society which is a product of varied mode of production and distribution. According to him, capitalism is the only mode of production that separate production from distribution. Profit is the wedge that splits the economy into two sectors. Goods are produced but not distributed unless the "owner" can make a profit. In all other modes of production, resources are produced for the sole reason of distribution and redistribution.

The exploitative force or nature inherent in capitalism which leads to increase in crime rate is the tendency to deny people the necessary resources for life and society. Capitalism exploitation is not an unjust or unfair part of the capitalist system. The capitalist do not "steal" their profits from the working class, exploitation is an inherent and essential part of the system. It is the source of both the class struggle and economic crises, which are just as integral to this system. The class struggle is an intrinsic and permanent feature of the political economy of capitalism as is the use of the police and judiciary to enforce this system against resistance from the exploited.

Applying it to this work, political economy theory explains that human trafficking thrives because of the exploitative nature of capitalism and this exploitative nature or force inherent in capitalism leads to increase in the crime rate.

IV. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts ex-post-facto research design. Ex-post-facto or after the fact research design, is based on the examination of the independent and dependent variables after the events have taken place. It is a type of research design that examines past events or combinations of events to arrive at an account of what has happened in the past and link it to the present. Attempts were made to examine past events or combination of events and acquire facts in order to arrive at conclusions

In ex-post-facto design, the test of hypothesis involves observing the independent and dependent variables at the same time because the effects of the former on the latter had already taken place before the investigation.

V. METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

Documentary method of data collection is appropriate for this study, because it well suited for contextual analysis and also useful when the task is to glean; illuminate, interpret and extract valuable information to draw inference from the available evidence so as to reach a conclusion.

VI. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative descriptive method of data analysis was adopted in this research. It is dynamic form of data analysis that is oriented towards summarizing the informational contents of data. Qualitative descriptive analysis moves farther into the domain of interpretation because effort is made to understand not only the manifest but also the latent content of data with a view to discovery patterns or regularities in the data.

VII. DATA ANALYSIS

VII.1 Effects of Cross Border Human Trafficking on Nigeria's National Image

Human trafficking is a global menace that creates dents on countries' national image. National image is a significant factor or an essential element for the perception and assessment of national character. Human trafficking occurs, the consequences are devastating for victims and the larger community – all society suffers, as well as principles of democratic freedom, principles of democratic society, rule of law and human rights.

Human trafficking portrays Nigeria in a bad light. It creates wrong impression that the country is unable to provide for her citizens especially in terms of employment and social welfare, hence the mass trafficking of her able-bodied youths to foreign countries. Also, human trafficking involving Nigerian ladies gives an unpleasant impression that Nigerian citizens help to sustain the underground sex industry in Europe involving young teenagers.

Human trafficking leads to brain drain; consequently, deprives the country high-skilled manpower needed for rapid national development. As a result of the effect of brain drain, Nigeria's health care sector has been in deplorable state partly due to inadequate number of professionals. For instance, the report on the progress of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as documented by Anuforo (2010) shows that Nigeria really still does not have the kind of public health system that the country needs.

Furthermore, human trafficking frustrates the efforts of the government towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) particularly Education for All. Many of the victims of child trafficking are deprived of the opportunity to acquire formal education. Besides, Ezinma (2010) reported that over 12 million Nigerian children are in the bondage of child labour and more are at risk of joining the child labour condition. He stated in his report that it is quite sad that many years after the goal of International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour work (IPEC) was launched, the prevention and elimination of worst form of child labour is still a mirage in Nigeria. This casts doubts on the commitment of the country towards eliminating child labour which is akin to child slavery.

In addition, human trafficking exposes some Nigerian citizens to all forms of inhuman treatment in foreign countries. These

include physical assault, rape, detention and in some extreme cases execution. Many Nigerians are also known to be languishing in prisons in some countries of the world due to the misadventure associated with human trafficking. Dangerous journeys expose trafficked victims to injury and even death. While overcrowded and unhealthy conditions, lack of food and water increase the risk of spreading infectious diseases.

Finally, human trafficking creates an environment of violence, crime and fear. separates families, destroys social bonds and support networks, and undermines the economic prospects of the country. It equally gives rise to frequent deportation of Nigerian citizens from foreign countries with its associated diplomatic implications.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Human trafficking is an endemic global problem. Its effects are damaging, disastrous and devastating to the victims, the family and the society at large. In view of the pervading effects of human trafficking on Nigeria and Nigerians, there is need for combined efforts at national, regional and international levels in order to curb the menace. The government, law enforcement agencies, media, religious bodies, traditional rulers and the civil society organizations all are expected to play an important role in the war against human trafficking.

Nigerian government should provide employment opportunities for youths, and create an encouraging environment for the private sector to invest thereby, increasing employment opportunities. They should also provide basic amenities which include provision of infrastructure, electricity, water, good road and

communication facilities as well as cheap credit. In addition, law enforcement agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigeria Immigration Services (NIS) should be trained on the provisions of the law in prevention of trafficking, apprehension, and prosecution of traffickers.

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