

Child Trafficking, Illegal Migration and its Concomitant Effects on Nigeria's Socio-Economic Development

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Abstract

This study investigated the effects of human trafficking and illegal migration on Nigeria's socio-economic development. A convenience sampling technique was used in selecting 150 respondents from the total staff population of the Nigeria Immigration Service, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other related offences Commission and the International Organisation for Migration. Data was collected using a questionnaire tested with Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), and a reliability coefficient of 0.82 was obtained, indicating the reliability of the instrument deployed. Data obtained were analyzed using simple percentages and linear regression analysis. Findings revealed that human trafficking and illegal migration negatively affected Nigeria's socio-economic development. It recommended, amongst others, that the market for cheap labour, which served as an enabler of human trafficking, needed to be paralyzed; otherwise, efforts in this regard may not record any meaningful progress.

Keywords: Human Trafficking, Illegal Migration, Socio-economic Development, Labour.

Introduction

Within the West African sub-region, the practice of trafficking in persons (formerly known as the slave trade) is synonymous, dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries during the colonialization era. Though the trade in enslaved people was outlawed in the twilight of the end of European imperialism, it is now taking up a new shape in a different form. Within the Nigerian context, human trafficking is now an issue. Quite obviously, certain internal contradictions, including massive unemployment, poverty, the poor state of the economy, heightened levels of insecurity and weak legislation, appear to encourage the trade. According to Abiodun, Akinlade & Oladejo (2021), Human trafficking is an organized crime involving trading in human beings, a trade facilitated by traffickers for monetary gains or other pecuniary interests, indeed human trafficking continues to thrive in Nigeria; despite the creation of agencies to prevent the practice or at best minimize its occurrence (Okogbule, 2012).

Globally, women and children often fall victim to human trafficking for domestic work, sexual exploitation, or forced labour, among other purposes. The situation threatens national, regional and global peace and security (NAPTIP 2013). The human and social implications of human trafficking have far-reaching implications for humanity and the society at large. Apart from the physical torture and abuse meted out to victims, the emotional and psychological ordeal of victims in the hands of traffickers and the attendant impacts on such individuals and society are destructive (World Bank Development Report, 2012). In other words, human trafficking, just like illicit trade in arms, weapons and narcotics, cyber war, and financial or money laundering, is among other services that put the universe in a social dilemma (Poulin, 2004).

Trafficking in children as a variant of human trafficking involves gross violations of the rights of children who are vulnerable and unsuspecting of the acts of the traffickers. It sometimes involves denying children their fundamental rights, including education, health and protection from sexual exploitation. Child trafficking remains one of the three most profitable trades, as it comes next to drug trafficking and arms trafficking. Though it is difficult to ascertain the exact number of persons, including children, trafficked across the globe, available data from UNODC reveal that more than 450 000 victims were trafficked between 2003 and 2021 (UNODC, 2021). Lawrence & Roberts (2012) believe that the historical pattern of Africa's involvement in the slave trade era remains a fundamental element in the present-day practice of trafficking in persons. In other words, human trafficking comes in the form of modern-day slavery, as seen in practices such as forced labour and debt bondage, which could be likened to modern-day slavery (Hobbs, Mckechnie and Lavalette, 1999). The trade does not only expose victims to psychological and physical abuse but also suffers violations of their fundamental human rights.

Trafficking in person, in general, and child trafficking, is a challenge in present-day Nigeria. The internal dimension of human trafficking consists of young women, girls, and boys trafficked from their natural/rural environments to urban areas through intermediaries or by loosely organized crime networks (Okogbule, 2012). The practice sometimes involves taking them across the West African sub-region, where their vulnerabilities are exploited to the advantage of the perpetrators of the trade. When these young persons are trafficked, the agents of the illegal trade usually compensate their host families and those assisted in securing such placements.

The external dimension of human trafficking involves taking victims abroad either for sexual or labour exploitation. It continues to be a grave concern in recent years, especially the implications

on the country's corporate image and socio-economic development. The general practice is that victims are trafficked abroad after they are made to sign documents agreeing to pay their sponsors a sum of money as a refund for their travel expenses (Adesina, 2014).

Child trafficking thrives principally in Nigeria due to poverty and certain customary and traditional practices. Adesina (2014) argues that parents often subscribe to child trafficking due to the need to solve economic predicaments and sometimes the parents' greed. Modernizing African societies could have been crucial to changing perceptions about specific traditional settings and views, but financial requirements have prevailed over social values. Folami (2011) argues that the free economic system has allowed children to be exploited. It is given this societal problem that this paper seeks to interrogate human trafficking and illegal migration as two issues affecting the human race all over the world. Apart from weak legislation and the failure of government policy to curb trade, this paper seeks to interrogate other factors that encourage this illicit trade.

Statement of the Problem

Child trafficking and illegal migration have become two nagging issues within Nigerian society, grossly affecting all aspects of human capital development and national development and transformation. The trade-in of humans continues to inhibit the development of citizens in an atmosphere that jeopardizes their future and prospects. The position of Nsude (2021) that an average child suffers one form of abuse or the other before clocking 18 is a pointer to the problem at hand. He reiterated further that the lack of reportage of the problem encourages it. The challenge posed by human trafficking in Nigeria and illegal migration in recent years justifies this paper, especially on how it negatively affects Nigeria's socio-economic development. It is within this context that this study seeks answers on what the enablers of human trafficking are. This will help to develop a holistic approach to combating the practice in all ramifications.

Objectives of the Study

- i) The study seeks to examine why human trafficking persists in Nigeria;
- ii) Analyze the implications of human trafficking in Nigeria
- iii) Develop a framework to curb human trafficking in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i) Why is human trafficking persisting in Nigeria?

- ii) What are the implications of human trafficking in Nigeria?
- iii) What possible frameworks can curb human trafficking in Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are postulated to be tested in this study:

HO₁ There is no significant relationship on the effect of counter instruments and human trafficking in Nigeria

HO₂ There is no significant relationship between human trafficking and illegal migration in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Human Trafficking is not new in Nigeria, but the recent pattern requires some interrogation and new approaches. Human trafficking can be likened to the modern slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries (Adesina, 2014). However, since the slave trade became outdated, its resurgence in the form of human trafficking naturally attracted attention from all. Human trafficking, apart from being a public health challenges affecting the world, is also a reminder of the dangers to which human beings are exposed. The demand for cheap labour, which often drives human trafficking nationally and internationally, needs to be examined holistically. The labour, which comes in the form of domestic work, street hawking, drug couriering and sexual exploitation, just to mention a few, justifies why human trafficking still thrives centuries after the slave trade had been outlawed. Even after the institutionalization of counter instruments to stop illegal trade, little has changed. Apart from kidnapping, which sometimes achieves the same purpose, human traffickers exchange women and children for monetary gains at the detriment of the victim, family, and society (Tola, 2012).

Human trafficking is a social malady attributed to poverty, illiteracy, greed and weak legislation. Victims are traded to unknown areas in deplorable conditions for monetary gain (Tola, 2012). In the last decade or thereabout, human trafficking has considerably increased throughout the world and particularly in Nigeria, where the desire to leave the country is very high. With perpetrators enticing the victims' families with money and other material gains, victims end up being forced into hard labour, forced marriages, and domestic servitude (Jacqueline, 2006). In most instances, families are ensnared by false promises of a better life for their victims within or outside the country. Consequently, the survival and development of victims are threatened, thereby denying them their rights to education, health, and protection from sexual exploitation and other forms of

abuse (O'Neil, 2015). Within this context, issues affecting women and children will be put in context.

For example, child trafficking, the most typical variant of human trafficking under national and international laws, clearly shows that several measures, including legal and institutional measures, have been adopted at international, regional and national levels to protect children. In Nigeria, the most profound measure to tackle child trafficking is the enactment of the child rights act by the Federal government and the establishment of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons in 2003. However, this has not significantly impacted the plight of children whose rights are abused and violated daily. Part of what depicts Nigeria as a country where their rights are not protected are practices of branding children as witches, leading to their stigmatization by society and the community. At the extreme, children's vulnerability is depicted by exposure to heightening levels of insecurity and banditry, sometimes leading to the displacement of families from their abodes and their consequent concentration in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps across the country. Closely related to this are practices such as child marriages which encourage children to get married at a very tender age, a practice common in the northern part of the country (Bolaji, 2010; NAPTIP, 2013). It is at this juncture that this paper seeks to interrogate what the enablers of human trafficking are.

One of the enablers of human trafficking in Nigeria is poverty. A report recently released by the National Bureau of Statistics reported that there were 133 million Nigerians said to be living under one form of multidimensional poverty or the other (NBS, 2022). In this regard, Nigeria is regarded as the world's poverty capital, as shown by data on growth and development indicators (World Bank, 2012; UNICEF, 2019; Omobowale & Olutayo, 2009; NBS, 2022).

The poverty level in Nigeria routinely contradicts the state of affairs of a country richly endowed with enormous natural and human resources (Sofu, 2003). This situation has been blamed on poor management of resources due to bad governance and the over-flogged problem of endemic corruption (Egwakhe, 2007). Unfortunately, successive governments in the country since 1999 have failed to tackle the problem, as depicted by available statistics. However, growing poverty has had more devastating effects on vulnerable members of society, including women, children and the aged. The importance of the continued existence of poverty in the country is that the

rights of children, women and the aged have been trampled upon with reckless abandonment (Egwakhe, 2007). While the effort to reduce poverty is acknowledged, the economic, political and social structures to enable children to thrive and achieve their potential must be jealously guarded. (Bradshaw, Chant, & Lineker 2019).

The nexus between human exploitation, poverty and socio-economic development is quite apparent. That human trafficking is taking place on the same continent where the slave trade was practiced suggests that endemic poverty continues to ravage Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. This can be adduced to the problem of human trafficking hence, the thrust of this paper which also seeks to examine the contemporary practice of illegal migration. While the two may appear different, it can be seen that victims of either suffer the same fate and consequences in the long run hence, their interconnectivity. This is a pointer to what government needs to do if it is genuinely committed to tackling human trafficking. While doing that, children's rights must be protected and guarded to eliminate child labour in whatever form (ILO, 2019).

Closely related to this is the need to address the drivers of vulnerability in different parts of the country, which include lack of access to basic amenities such as lack of access to markets and basic health facilities, access to safe, clean and affordable energy, quality education, good health care services, clean water, and other facilities that could aid their development in all ramifications (Ifeakandu, 2018).

Research Methodology

For this research, a descriptive survey technique was adopted. The design is appropriate since the study seeks to investigate what effects human trafficking and illegal migration has on Nigeria's socio-economic development. The data for the study was collected from carefully selected respondents with the aid of a questionnaire. The population consists of all officers and members of staff of the Nigeria Immigration Service, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and the International Organization for Migration, estimated at 28 303. These three bodies were chosen given their respective mandates directly linked to migration or immigration in whatever form. The sampling technique used is convenience sampling, allowing respondents to be chosen as determined by the realities on the field. A proportionate sample size of 150 respondents was chosen, that is, 50 respondents from each selected organization. The validation of the questionnaire items using test-retest methods of

Pearson Product Moment yielded an index ratio of 0.82. Data collected were analyzed in frequency counts, simple percentages, and linear regression analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Showing why human trafficking persists in Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENTS.	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		\bar{x}	SD
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
1	High rate of poverty	50	33.3	69	46.0	20	13.3	11	7.4	2.58	1.31
2	High level of illiteracy and Ignorance	48	32.0	67	44.7	18	12.0	17	11.3	2.74	1.13
3	Weak legislations and Policy summersaults	50	33.3	72	48.0	22	14.7	6	4.0	2.78	.82
4	Availability of Markets for cheap labour	44	29.3	63	40.0	22	14.7	21	14.0	2.52	.52
5	Greed and desire to make money.	47	31.3	65	43.3	25	16.7	13	8.7	2.76	.96
Weighted mean score = 2.68											

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result in table 1 revealed respondents' responses on why child trafficking persists in Nigeria. With a weighed mean score of 2.68, items 1, 2, 3 and 5 depict higher mean scores of 2.58, 2.78, 2.76 to indicate why human trafficking persists in Nigeria in spite of efforts put in place to curb the menace.

Table 2: Showing the implications of human trafficking and illegal migration in Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENTS.	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		\bar{x}	SD
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
6.	Exposes victims to forms of exploitation.	48	32.0	70	46.6	18	12.0	14	9.3	2.61	1.25
7.	Deprives the country of high-skilled manpower needed for rapid national development.	49	32.7	67	44.7	20	13.3	14	9.3	2.76	1.08

8.	Batters the image of the country and portrays it as one that causes social dislocation.	54	36.0	81	54.0	10	6.7	5	3.3	3.12	.89
9.	Imposes psychological and trauma on victims and their families	52	34.7	75	50.0	14	9.3	9	6.0	2.53	.51
10.	Exposes victims to the danger of being used for scientific and medical researchers in foreign countries.	55	36.7	69	46.0	15	10.0	11	7.3	2.76	.96

Weighted mean score = **2.75**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result in table 2 revealed the respondents' responses towards the implications of human trafficking in Nigeria, with a weighed mean score of 2.75. Items 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 depicting a higher mean scores of 2.61, 2.76, 3.12, 2.53 and 2.76 indicates far reaching implications of human trafficking and illegal migration on Nigeria's socio-economic development. The import therein is that human trafficking and illegal migration has far reaching implications on the country's development, victims and more importantly, the corporate image of the country.

Table 3: Showing the framework capable of curbing human trafficking in Nigeria

S/N	STATEMENTS.	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree		\bar{x}	SD
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%		
11	More awareness on the danger of human trafficking needs to be done by NGOs and civil liberty organisations.	48	32.0	77	64.7	15	10.0	10	6.3	2.63	.76
12	The market for cheap labour should be paralyzed	55	36.7	85	56.7	8	5.3	2	1.3	2.98	1.20
13	Relatives of trafficked victims should be sanctioned appropriately	51	34.0	82	54.7	11	7.3	6	4.0	2.84	1.08
14	Endemic poverty and corruption must be fought	49	32.7	80	53.3	12	8.0	9	6.0	2.52	.81

headlong.

15	Sustainable empowerment programmes where citizens are equipped with necessary skills and funding to discourage them from been trafficked should be put in place.	46	30.7	74	49.3	17	11.3	8.7	2.61	.48
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Weighted mean score = **2.72**

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The result in table 3 revealed the framework capable of curbing human trafficking in Nigeria. With a weighed mean score of 2.72, Items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 depicting a mean score of 2.63, 2.98, 2.84, 2.52 and 2.61 are indicative of new approaches to curb human trafficking in Nigeria. This when fully implemented will go a long way to reduce the illicit trade if not totally eliminate it.

4.3 Analysis of Hypotheses

Table 4: Showing the relationship on the effect of counter instruments and human trafficking in Nigeria.

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Df	r-cal.	r-tab	decision
Effect of counter instruments and human trafficking in Nigeria.	14.04	2.41	313	0.322	0.195	Rejected
	13.17	3.31				

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4 shows that r-calculated value of 0.322 is greater than r-table value of 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the tested null hypothesis is rejected and can be concluded that there exist a significant relationship between counter instruments and human trafficking in Nigeria. However, findings reveal that much more needs to be done to stop the illicit trade completely.

Table 5: Showing that there is no significant relationship between human trafficking and illegal migration in Nigeria.

Variables	Mean	Standard	Df	r-cal.	r-tab	Decision
JASS IN COLLABOARTION WITH UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA, GHANA						
Human trafficking and Illegal Migration in Nigeria.	15.01	2.82				
			313	0.345	0.195	Rejected
	13.17	3.31				

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 5 shows that r-calculated value of 0.345 is greater than r-table value of 0.195 at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that the tested null hypothesis is rejected and can be concluded that there exist a significant relationship between human trafficking and illegal migration in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question one revealed that human trafficking persists in Nigeria due to several factors, including the availability of a market for cheap labour, poverty, greed on the part of parents/guardians, and weak legislation. This is in line with the study of Anayo-Enechukwu (2020), who argued that Nigeria lacked effective legislation against child trafficking, which has made tackling the problem quite challenging. He argued that while some countries had effective legislation against human trafficking and other related offences, Nigerian laws, on the other hand, were weak, thereby encouraging the perpetration of the act.

On research question two, findings revealed that human trafficking created a terrible image and impression about the country; hence, the unfair treatment was meted out to Nigerians who are visiting or residents outside the shores of the country. This finding aligns with the study of Njoku (2015), who identified that human trafficking is a conundrum erroneously portraying Nigerians in lousy light overseas.

For research question three, findings revealed several measures that could halt the drift. They included paralyzing the market for cheap labour, putting up more effective legislation that would entirely criminalize trafficking in persons, sexual and labour exploitation or other forms of inhumane treatment of fellow humans. In addition, there is also the urgent need to domesticate

the child rights law in all states of the federation. The frequency of these attacks clearly signals what the country is not doing right and what should be done to halt the drift. The two tested hypotheses confirmed that there is a significant relationship between the effect of counter instruments and human trafficking in Nigeria and also between human trafficking and illegal migration in the country, as indicated by ILO (2019) and Adesina (2014), respectively.

Conclusion

This study presents the reality of human trafficking in Nigeria. It maintains that the responses and strategic actions from the government and critical stakeholders needed to combat crime remain grossly inadequate. The situation where trafficked victims are taken against their will and forced into hard labour, prostitution and servitude negates the basic principles of fundamental rights and freedom of all persons irrespective of status, creed, gender or colour. In the middle of this problem is endemic poverty, craving for extra income, greed, and available markets for cheap labour serving as enablers for the trade. However, the list of causal factors is not exhaustive. However, the trade in humans would be adequately curbed with improved capacity and the development of new strategies backed by strong legislation. Indeed, where better laws are in place, the magnitude of human trafficking, as currently seen in Nigeria, could be significantly reduced.

Recommendations

There must be realistic and measurable approach to the reduction of poverty. Sustainable programmes that can reduce the rate of poverty, such as -skills and craft acquisition, granting soft loans for businesses, agricultural training, and forming cooperative societies, must be institutionalized and sustained.

The market for cheap labour and sexual exploitation must be paralyzed. These two constituted the highest areas where victims are diverted to. As such, there cannot be any meaningful progress in stopping human trafficking if there is still a high demand for cheap labour and sexual exploitation within and outside the country. This action must be sustained to discourage exploiting victims, among others.

This study also recommends that relevant government agencies collaborate with media, non-governmental organizations and other critical stakeholders on a massive campaign to discourage illicit trade in all ramifications.

More punitive penalties against persons found guilty of human trafficking should be enacted. Also, relatives of victims, whether used as labourers or otherwise, should be prosecuted and given heavy punishments to serve as a deterrent. This will go a long way to strengthen the legal framework against human trafficking and illegal migration in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa, where such is still a practice.

Non-governmental Organisations and civil liberty organizations must step up their advocacy on the domestication of the child rights act by all federation states. States who refuse to domesticate such laws must be blocked, and no support concerning attracting grants for curbing human trafficking must be given.

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