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EDITORIAL DESK

The Journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy stands as a beacon of scholarly excellence, drawing upon a diverse spectrum of researchers hailing from the expansive West African region and beyond. This volume showcases 14 meticulously researched articles curated from contributors in Nigeria and the United States of America. The genesis of these scholarly endives can be traced back to the auspicious conference convened at the Lagos State University Makanjuola Lecture Hall, held in December, 2023.

These articles, characterized by their depth and precision, underwent rigorous scrutiny during the conference, with over 90 participants actively engaging in critique. Subsequent to this extensive quality assurance regimen and plagiarism checks, only 14 articles successfully met the standards set forth by the esteemed guild of the editorial team, in strict adherence to international best practices.

It is with great pleasure that the Board of Editors announces the second edition of the publication schedule of the journal. Our heartfelt congratulations extend to the authors whose papers demonstrated exceptional merit and successfully navigated the rigorous selection criteria. To future researchers, we extend our encouragement to strive for greater heights in their scholarly pursuits.

The Board of Editors appreciates the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji Bello, mni NPOM for providing the enabling environment for the conference and her directives to the editorial team for strong quality assurance measures. We believe in your leadership and concerted efforts at ensuring high standards for the journal publication.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP
Editor in Chief

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING AS MODERN SLAVERY IN AFRICA

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Abstract

Human trafficking remains a pervasive issue in Africa, where it manifests as a contemporary form of slavery, casting shadows on the continent's efforts towards social and economic progress. The underlying factors contributing to the persistence of human trafficking are deeply rooted in socio-economic challenges, political instability, and insufficient legal frameworks. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education create fertile grounds for exploitation, with traffickers preying on vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. Modern slavery takes various forms in Africa, including forced labor, sex trafficking, and child exploitation. The paper examines the diverse manifestations of human trafficking across the continent, emphasizing the importance of understanding these degrees to develop targeted intervention strategies. It also explores the role of technology in facilitating trafficking networks, emphasizing the need for innovative solutions to counteract these advancements. The paper underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and coordinated efforts by governments, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies to address the root causes, in other to dismantle the structures that enable trafficking networks to thrive with emphasizes on the necessity of victim-centered approaches. It also highlights the importance of rehabilitation, legal support, and community reintegration programs, which aims to rebuild the lives of survivors who had been hitherto physically, emotionally, and psychologically affected.

Keywords: Human trafficking, Migration networks, Illegal migration, Transnational organised crime, Modern slavery

Introduction

Human trafficking erodes personal dignity and destroys the moral fabric of society. It is an affront to humanity that tragically reaches all parts of the world.

President Donald J. Trump

Human trafficking is an unconscionable attack on the dignity of the most vulnerable among us. Action can't wait. President Joseph R. Biden

The phenomenon of human trafficking which encompasses a spectrum of crimes ranging from forced labor, forced marriage and sexual exploitation to involuntary servitude often described as modern slavery is a complicated and growing problem globally. Public debates since the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s have centered on this concept. This is so because the collapse occasioned migration flows and the rapid growth of transnational criminal organizations operating globally (Mackenzie, 2020; Morewitz & Morewitz, 2019; Kleemans & Smit, 2014).

Trafficking in persons stands as a pervasive and disgraceful concern that continues to affect societies worldwide. Nearly all countries around the world has been affected either as countries of origin, transit or destination (Kigbu & Hassan, 2015), despite the formal abolition of slave trade and slavery by the League of Nations in 1926. By the estimation of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2014), about 25 million persons are trafficked across the world each year, notwithstanding increased international attention and resources from states and other non-governmental institutions.

In African, where the shadows of historical injustices linger and socio-economic disparities persist, the scourge of human trafficking has found fertile ground, exploiting vulnerabilities including women, children, and migrants and perpetuating a cycle of exploitation across all

regions (Osah, Isikalu, Nwakanma, Irmiya, 2023; Schroeder, Edgemon, Aletraris, Kagotho, Clay-Warner, & Okech, 2022; DiRienzo & Das, 2017). Persons are moved from Africa to other parts of the world forcefully to mostly Western Europe and the Middle East (U.S. Department of States, 2016). In 2014, it was estimated that 3.7 million people in Africa were held in slavery and forced labour even over a decade afterwards the figures continue to increase astronomically (International Labor Organization, 2014).

Historically, the echoes of injustices, including the transatlantic slave trade which saw over 12 million slaves transported from Africa to the Americas and over two million deaths between the 16th to 19th centuries, reverberate in the contemporary issue of human trafficking. While the forms may have evolved over time, the essence remains reminiscently similar, that is the commodification of human lives for economic gain (Wiarda, 2017; Eltis, 2008).

Africa's diverse regions experience human trafficking in distinct ways, shaped by regional peculiarities, economic disparities, and geopolitical influences. Whether it is the exploitation of child labor in West Africa's cocoa industry or the trafficking of persons for sexual exploitation in the Maghreb, a better understanding of regional dynamics is essential for targeted interventions. Slavery is the commonest form in the sub-Saharan Africa. Persons are engaged in forced labour and forced marriages (Onyekachi and Azubike, 2021) and Africa accounts for 8% of child sex trafficking in the world (Narminio, 2023; Ngwe & Elechi, 2012; Onuoha, 2011). The illicit trade in persons does not only limit economic growth and development, but also has social consequences including disrupted families, shattered communities, psychological hangover on individuals (Banu, Saunders, Conner, Blassingame & Shah, 2021; Ottisova, Smith & Oram, 2018). As well, human trafficking disrupts the job market by introducing a pool of trafficked individuals who are often subjected to exploitative labor conditions, such as forced labor or sex trafficking. This, not only create unfair competition but also leads to the displacement of local workers who may struggle to compete with the low wages and exploitative practices associated with trafficking (Bales, 2003).

Many of the victims of human trafficking fall prey to it as they seek better life or enhanced economic opportunities, instead of having their hope actualized; they become vulnerable to false promises of good jobs and higher wages and face a never-ending cycle of exploitation poverty conditions become worsened (Bales, 2003). Unfortunately, the number of people falling victim to menace around the world continue to grow astronomically, making it a global enterprise (Van Nguyen, Nguyen, Le & Do, 2020; Meriläinen & Vos, 201; Fitzgibbon, 2003).

Those who fall victim to trafficking often originate from marginalized and vulnerable communities, where access to education and economic opportunities is already limited (Shamsudeen, 2022). Other precipitating factors include armed conflicts, and weak governance structures which create a breeding ground for traffickers to prey on the desperate and marginalized (Sibanda, 2023; Ikyernum, 2022; Mlambo & Ndebele, 2021). By falling prey to trafficking, these individuals are deprived of the opportunity to escape poverty and enhance their socio-economic circumstances.

In Nigeria for instance, several factors, including the country's pervasive and rising levels of inequality, political instability, civil unrest, internal armed conflicts and militarism, natural disasters, unemployment and underemployment particularly among women, greed, conflict, economic transition, impoverishment in rural areas, commercialization, economic decline and uncertainty, and sharply declining living standards. These factors increase the vulnerability of exploitations by the criminal syndicate involvement in the trade in persons (Olubukola, 2020; Eselebor, 2019; Iyanda & Osah, 2016).

Some of the other reasons why human trafficking thrive include low pay, unfair labour practices, violence, lack of social and welfare support, economic crisis, limited educational opportunities, porous border controls, bad governance, an ongoing and rising demand for cheap labour, the combined forces of organized crime and political corruption, and the state's diminishing ability to provide needs (Abulkadir, 2010). At its core, human trafficking inflicts profound harm on its victims, stripping them of agency, dignity, and basic human rights. The physical and psychological toll endured by survivors reverberates across generations.

For this paper the Structural Functionalism Theory by Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons and later Radcliffe Brown, Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore was instructive. Structural-functional theory states that every part of a society serves a function in maintaining the solidarity and stability of the whole. Ideally, all the parts of a society maintain equilibrium and a state of balance under perfect conditions. However, when problems arise, it is because a part of the social system has become dysfunctional; usually caused by some type of rapid change, which the other parts of the system are not able to adjust to and compensate for quickly enough. Structural functionalism explains that social deviant behaviour, such as human trafficking, is a dysfunctional way for a person trying to achieve a good life through crime as the quickest means.

The problematique is that human trafficking has assumed alarming proportions in Africa with incalculable persons falling prey to exploitation. A thorough understanding of the crime's scope is hindered by its covert nature, underreporting, and difficulties in data collection. The issue encompasses a wide range of exploitative practices and goes beyond the conventional concepts of sex trafficking and forced labor. Casualties, frequently weak populaces including ladies, youth, and travelers, experience different types of double-dealing, including constrained work, child labour, sexual bondage, and dealing for organ exchange.

This study answers the following the research questions: how has the historical context in Africa contributed to the prevalence of human trafficking as a form of modern slavery; what are the socio-economic factors that make certain regions in Africa more susceptible to human trafficking; how effective are current legal frameworks and law enforcement efforts in combating human trafficking in different African countries and how does the intersectionality, conflict and migration contribute to the dynamics of human trafficking in Africa.

The concepts of human trafficking and modern day slavery

In response to emerging global concerns, the concept of security has undergone some transformations since the end of the Cold War. One of these concerns is human security which is about freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom from human indignity. This perspective is a departure from the traditional national security, which concerns with the frontiers of a nation-state. Meanwhile, since the end of the rivalry between the West and East blocs, global concern has been on how to escape the trap of organized crimes such as drug trafficking, illegal arms trade, oil bunkering and human trafficking (Inokoba & Ebienfa, 2013).

Human trafficking in particular is a crime against humanity. It is a well-structured and organized criminal network that transports a large number of migrants over a long distance. In the context of globalization, among the factors that explain the scale of human trafficking are economic globalization, the impact of structural adjustment policies on the feminization of poverty, the lack of laws or non-enforcement of those in effect, armed conflict and even the complicity of some governments, particularly economically poor countries, with organized crime. In addition, communication technologies are spreading the expansion of sex tourism, to the point of turning some developing countries into body fairs (Malah & Asongu, 2022).

The generally accepted definition of human trafficking is the one offered in Article 3(a) of the United Nations in the United Nations Palermo Protocol (2000) which defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of threat or the use of coercion or abduction or fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or a position of vulnerability or the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation force labour or service, slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

The Palermo Protocol supplemented the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (2000) was the first international document to define the concept. The instrument further noted that anyone subjected to the kinds of coercion and manipulation laid out in the definition cannot 'consent' to being exploited. Most often the vulnerability of victims is exploited, especially young females who are taken away from their homelands to cities within their countries, or across national boundaries and exploited for optimum economic benefits. Though Rankin & Kinsella (2011) state that men, women and children of all ages and from all backgrounds can become victims of this crime, which occurs in every region of the world. This business that subject persons to modern day slavery has become much profitable in the world. As Obuah (2006) noted, it has become the fastest growing source of income for organized crime and the third most important, exceeded only by drugs and arms trade.

For Mahmoud & Trebesch, (2010), human trafficking a situation in which an individual travelling abroad was locked and forced to work for a no or little pay via means of coercion. While Bales trafficking is a process by which a person comes into a situation of slavery: the people concerned are controlled by force or by debt bondage, or are often subjected to some form of captivity or physical abuse. In the Nigeria context, the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act (2003) defines trafficking as all acts and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across Nigeria borders, purchases, sales, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a [person involving the use of deception, coercion or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the persons, whether for or not involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions.

The traffickers often use violence or fraudulent employment agencies and fake promises of education and job opportunities to trick and coerce their victims. Unfortunately, the organized networks or individuals behind these lucrative crimes take advantage of people who are vulnerable, desperate or simply seeking a better life. It is often noted that the human trafficking and migrant smuggling are global and widespread crimes that use men, women and children for profit, with about 50% of the traffickers are female, indicating that this criminal network is also run by women (UNODC, 2014). Unfortunately, Akor (2011) noted that between 60 to 80 % Nigerian girls/women who are trafficked are in the sex trade.

Preamble to the Convention for the Suppression of Traffic in Persons and for the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949): "Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, services or the removal of organs". This definition is the most widely endorsed as it provided the essential basis for national law reform. Further to this definition, article 3 paragraph (b) states; "the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in paragraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in paragraph (a) have been used" (NAPTIP, 2014).

According to Laczko (2002) human trafficking involves controlling and exploiting peoples after

transporting them to a new location, often beyond the borders of their homeland. In this modern form of slavery, trafficking use threats, intimidation and violence to break their victims' will and resistance. Like the transatlantic slavery, this trafficking has become a global business, reaping huge profits for traffickers and organised crime syndicates, generating massive human right violations, and causing serious problems for governments. In the views of Oxman-martinez, Martinez & Hanley (2000) trafficking involves the movement of trafficked individual across international frontiers.

Human trafficking, as defined by international law, involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of persons through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. This exploitation can manifest in various forms, such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, or the removal of organs. The definition emphasizes the coercive and exploitative nature of the crime, distinguishing it from voluntary migration or employment (Smith & Kangaspunta, 2012; Parreñas, Hwang & Lee, 2012).

Forms of modern slavery are numerous and not limited to these: sex trafficking, child sex trafficking, forced marriage, forced labour, debt bondage/ debt slavery, domestic servitude, forced child labour, transfer of a women by her spouse or husband's family or her own family to someone else in exchange for money or in line with different traditional rituals, forced soldiers in times of conflict, unlawful recruitment and use of child soldiers, organ harvesting and forced criminality and these are similar to the characteristics of slavery such as the lack of personal ownership, de-humanizing treatments, commodification of individuals and deprivation of the rights almost in totality (Mende, 2019; Patterson & Zhuo, 2018; Miers, 2000).

Nigeria's Trafficking in Person (Prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act, 2003 defines human trafficking as all involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across Nigerian borders, purchases, sales, transfer, receipt or harbouring of a person, involving the use of deception, coercion or debt bondage for the purpose of placing or holding the person whether or not in voluntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bounded labour or in slavery-like conditions.

Methodology and justification of participants

The paper adopts qualitative methodology interview and the phenomenological approach data collection as the study concerned about human experience through description that was provided by members of the Nigerian Immigration Service, Nigeria Police and The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to gather in-depth insights into the experiences of victims, traffickers, law enforcement officials, and other stakeholders. The qualitative data provided understanding of the social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to trafficking. The respondents were selected based on their vast knowledge in the topic. Interviews were conducted, translated and analyzed.

The Nigeria Immigration Service, established by the Act of Parliament in 1963 is an agency of government saddled with the responsibility of border security, control and monitoring of entry and exit of foreigners and Nigerian citizens in and outside Nigeria, as well as generally managing migration in Nigeria. They issue travel passport and other necessary documents to qualified persons, thus is mandated to combat human trafficking. On the other hand, the Nigeria Police is the principal law enforcement agency of the country. In general, the police is established to prevent crime, protect lives and property, maintain order in the society and arrest offenders. The third agency in this study is the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). NAPTIP is one of governmental agencies established in 2003 to fight the war against human trafficking. Through investigation of cases, prosecution of criminals, rescue and

rehabilitation of victims (NAPTIP Act, 2003). This study also recognizes that Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission (NIDCOM) are relevant agencies in combating the menace of human trafficking.

Findings and Discussion

All of the respondents agreed that human trafficking is a clandestine business that dehumanize its victims who fall prey due to a host of reasons including the quest to escape the poverty trap at all cost. Respondents identified several international and national instruments for the fight against human trafficking including the Protocol and conventions of the United Nations, African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Some of these instruments are the 1921 International Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Women and Children; 1966 International covenant on civil and political rights; 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR); The 1984 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (commonly known as the United Nations Convention Against Torture (UNCAT); the 1989 The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC or UNCRC); the 1979 The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); The 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (Palermo Protocol) and the 2000 Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime). African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 1981; Libreville Common Platform for Action of 2000; the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003 and many more. Despite these instruments, the menace still persist, because the demand-driven global business involve multiple stakeholders that have connections at all levels, both at countries of acquisition and destination.

The research underscores the multifaceted nature of human trafficking in Africa. Victims experience diverse forms of exploitation, including forced labor, sex trafficking, child trafficking, and trafficking for organ trade. This diversity highlights the need for targeted interventions that address the specific challenges associated with each form of exploitation.

The findings underscore the urgent need for a holistic and collaborative approach to combat human trafficking as modern slavery in Africa. Addressing the root causes, strengthening legal frameworks, empowering communities, and prioritizing the well-being of victims are essential elements in the development of effective anti-trafficking strategies.

Qualitative data illuminates the various factors that render individuals vulnerable to trafficking. Economic disparities, lack of education, political instability, and gender-based discrimination emerge as significant contributors. Understanding these vulnerabilities is critical for designing prevention strategies that address root causes and protect at-risk populations.

The research reveals the transnational nature of human trafficking in Africa. Traffickers operate across borders, exploiting porous migration routes and taking advantage of weak law enforcement and governance structures. This emphasizes the importance of regional and international collaboration to combat trafficking effectively.

The legal analysis highlights both the existence of anti-trafficking laws and the challenges associated with enforcement. Inconsistencies in legal frameworks, lack of resources, and corruption within law enforcement agencies contribute to gaps in the prosecution and conviction of traffickers. Strengthening legal mechanisms and enhancing enforcement capabilities are critical components of an effective response.

Findings indicate varying levels of awareness and understanding of human trafficking within

communities. Educational initiatives and awareness campaigns are crucial for fostering a collective understanding of the dangers and consequences of trafficking. Additionally, community engagement is essential for identifying and reporting potential cases of trafficking. Qualitative data sheds light on the experiences of victims, emphasizing the importance of victim-centric approaches. Support services, including access to medical care, legal assistance, and reintegration programs, are vital for aiding survivors in rebuilding their lives. Empowering victims is essential for breaking the cycle of exploitation.

Conclusion

The issue of human trafficking in Africa is a deeply troubling manifestation of modern slavery, reflecting the exploitation and victimization of vulnerable individuals across the continent. It remains a prevalent and persistent challenge in Africa as factors such as poverty, conflict, weak governance, and socio-economic disparities contribute to the vulnerability of individuals, making them susceptible to exploitation. In Africa, human trafficking takes on diverse forms, including sex trafficking, forced labor, child trafficking, and trafficking for organ trade. The multifaceted nature of exploitation underscores the urgent need for comprehensive and targeted interventions. Unfortunately, vulnerable populations, including women, children, migrants, and those living in conflict zones, are disproportionately affected by human trafficking. The exploitation of individuals from these groups perpetuates cycles of victimization and hinders social and economic development.

Recommendations

1. The challenge of many African countries face includes developing and enforcing robust legal frameworks to combat human trafficking. Thus, strengthening legislation, enhancing law enforcement capabilities, and promoting cross-border cooperation are essential components of an effective response.
2. Furthermore, since civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in raising awareness, providing support to victims, and advocating for stronger anti-trafficking measures is very essential. Their efforts contribute significantly to addressing the broader societal issues that foster trafficking.
3. Also, the approaches to combat human trafficking should be victim-centric, focusing on the protection, rehabilitation, and empowerment of survivors. This includes providing access to medical care, legal assistance, and reintegration programs.
4. Education and awareness campaigns are vital in preventing human trafficking. Efforts should target communities, law enforcement agencies, and policymakers, fostering a collective understanding of the dangers and consequences of trafficking.
5. Given the transnational nature of human trafficking, international collaboration is imperative. African nations should work together, alongside international organizations, to share information, harmonize legal frameworks, and coordinate efforts to combat trafficking.

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