

EXPUNGING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA THROUGH RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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Abstract

Human trafficking is a form of slavery that deprives the victims from their rights, freedom of movement and made them vulnerable to all kinds of diseases. Human trafficking is an organized crime and the two weapons used by the traffickers to get their victims are deception and through force. This paper discusses the causes, consequences and solution to human trafficking because a source of concern to every rational mind. some of the causes are greed, poverty, lack of information, unemployment and peer pressure but very little attention has been given to these factors. Hence the enthronement of Religious Studies which appeal to human conscience to do the right thing always and inculcate moral virtues such as good human relation, justice and maintenance of law and order. Human trafficking has continued to thrive because of collusion among security agents immigration, embassy, airline officers and traffickers. Therefore Nigerian government should address the issue of unemployment, poverty and create enabling environment for entrepreneurship for the populace. Also Religious bodies should inculcate good morals into the citizenry and educate them on good human relations to shun human trafficking.

Keywords :Expunging, Human Trafficking and Religious Studies.

Introduction

Human trafficking is a form of slavery, a crime against humanity, and abuse of human rights for financial gain. The weapons used by traffickers to get their victims are through force and deception. Human trafficking has continued to thrive in Nigeria because of poverty, unemployment, great demand for female prostitution, broken homes, high profits, lack of information and peer pressure. Human trafficking is an illegal business and a social problem which has brought untold hardship on the victims who are mostly women and girls, it is an organized crime involving many people such as the sponsors, supervisors and the recruiters who go to villages to deceive young girls and boys through their parents with the impression of assisting their children for better education employment and better opportunities. Human trafficking has continued to thrive in Nigeria because of collusion among security immigration, embassy and airline officials

and traffickers. These officials often take bribes in exchange for facilitating smooth passage across the borders for traffickers and their victims. (Okeshofa and Adenugba 2018).

Conceptual Frame Work

Human trafficking according to Luty and Lanier (2010) is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons by means of threat, use of force or deception. Abuse of power, vulnerability or giving money to a person In control of the victim for the purpose of cheap labour or commercial sex exploitation. Dagaci (2016) defined Human trafficking as a form of slavery which includes the movement of persons who are the victims and who are subject to violence, deception or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or force labour. It is also the human beings as commodities to meet global demands for commercial sexual slavery and force labour.

Religious is the belief and worship of a supernatural being that observes all human affairs and is interested in them. According to Nmah (1998) religion is a unified system of beliefs and practices related to sacred things set apart or forbidden.

Religious Studies

According to Nworie (2000), religious studies are the academic field of multi - disciplinary, secular study of religious beliefs, behaviours, and institutions. It describes, compares, interprets and explains religion, emphasizing systematic historical and across cultural perspectives. It also refers to the teaching of religions in general and its varied aspects, its beliefs, doctrines, rituals customs, rites and personal roles. It contributes to the development and growth of humanity and the safe keeping of the society. Lawal (2002) posits that religious studies teach morality and shape character. It is a process of guiding characters and development of an individual in the society in order for him/her to be able to do what is right or just. Also, it attempts to teach standard of right or wrong as well as its application to individuals.

An Overview of Human Trafficking

According to Okeshola and Adenugba (2018), human trafficking is a modern form of slavery. It is an illegal business and a social problem. Human trafficking is a social problem because it affects many people. It affects different categories of people. It is a Social problem because of the magnitude, the trend and pattern it has taken over the years. This business has unleashed untold hardship on victims who are mostly women and children. For most crimes to succeed there must be a giver and a taker. For the crime of trafficking to succeed, there must be people who aid or facilitate the movement and transportation of victims to a defined destination. There must also be a group who abets the crime, and who are the receiver.

Human trafficking is an organized crime. Many people are involved. It is a chain or continuum, with people in the crime performing specific tasks. In this organized crime

there are recruits. These are people who go to villages to deceive young girls and boys through their parents. They give the impression to parents of assisting their children for a better education, employment without the full knowledge of what await their children. Recruiters include-sisters, brothers, in-laws, driver, business men and women, law enforcement agents etc. the would-be victims move from one stage to another until they get to their final destinations where these young girls and boys are distributed to madams and "ogas" who need their services. We should bear in mind that the two weapons used by traffickers to get their victims are deception and through force. Human trafficking is a crime. Those who engaged in trafficking persons are often friends, relations, neighbor and familiar people to victims. Human trafficking is an organized crime. It has a chain of syndicate. In this organized crime we have the:

- Sponsors, financial and facilitators,
- There are madams and bosses, supervisors, accomplices or collaborators, aiders and abettors,
- Victims or persons who are trafficked and exploited (Okeshola, 2007).

Human trafficking has continued to thrive in Nigeria because of collusion among security, immigration, embassy and airline officers and traffickers. These officers often take bribes in exchange for facilitating smooth passage across the borders and traffickers and their victims (Musikilu, 2008). The practice of entrusting poor children to more affluent friends or relatives may create vulnerability. Some parents sell their children not just for the money, but also in the hope that their children will escape a situation of chronic poverty and move to a place where they will have a better life and more opportunities (Adepelumi, 2015) Within Nigeria, women and girls are trafficked primarily for domestic servitude and commercial sexual exploitation. Boys are trafficked for forced labour in street vending, agriculture, mining, stone quarries and as domestic servants. There is high demand. For child workers at the household level, agriculture, construction, quarries and brass melting in the informal sector (Adepelumi, 2015).

Keshola and Adenigba (2018) state that it has been observed that the victims of human trafficking are not to leave upon arrival at their destinations. They are held against their will through acts of coercion and forced to work or provide, services to the traffickers whose services may be forced labour or commercialized sexual exploitation, in addition, the arrangement may be structured as a work contract, but with no or low payment or in terms which are highly exploitative. Also, in some cases the arrangement is structured as debt bondage, with the victim not being permitted or able to pay off the debt. All the acts above are infringements to human rights of persons as spelt out in Nigeria Constitution of 1999, chapter 4, section 30 which states that; every Nigerian has the right to life which the traffickers violate by the use of physical coercion that sometimes leads to death; The victims are deprived of their rights, liberty and freedom of movement.

Theoretical Frame Work

George (1996) defines theory as a set of inter-related proposition that allows the systemization of knowledge, experience and prediction of social life and the generation of new research hypothesis. Meaning that a theory is a set of statement that say why and how several concepts are related, predict certain observable events and conclusion. This study is using economic and human learning theories. The economic theory argued that human traffickers observed that trade in human beings is a profitable area to generate income especially when few traffickers are arrested, prosecuted and sentenced for the crime. The human traffickers indulge in the illegal trade because of the gain and benefits accrue from it. Therefore the lesser the punishment the more human trafficking continues.

Maxxisteconomy theory According to Enaikele and Olutayo (2011) capitalism is characterized by inequality in wealth and power between individuals and this inequality is the root cause of crime. The Marxist sees power as largely being held by those who own and control the means of production (that is the Bourgeoisie who are the ruling class). The capitalist society reflects the relationship between the rich and the poor, and laws are not expressions of value consensus but rather a reflection of ruling class ideology and the general commitment to law by the members of the society. Dagacl (2016) posits that the Marxist perspective is concerned with the process of law making, law breaking and enforcement and the contradictions that arises from them. Furthermore, this perspective does not see crime as a willful violation of the common good but the struggle of the isolated individuals against the prevailing socio economic condition. Therefore, Marxist views crime as a force response to the inequality, socio economic disorder, and system generated by the excesses of the rich in the society. Thus people who allow themselves to be trafficked are the product of the failures on the economic infrastructures that is dictated and governed by the political infrastructure.

Social Learning Theory:(Operant Condition)Dagaci (2016) states that the social learning theory popularly called the operant conditioning argued that certain behaviours are learned because past examples were rewarded. Thus, people engage in crime because it has been more highly rewarded in the past or present than has other behaviour. Therefore, some people engage in human trafficking because it is lucrative and because of the decline of social values were people who stole public funds or commit all sorts of crime in order to enrich themselves are applauded, giving many titles and named heroes, instead of condemning their actions. Traffickers also indulge in this nefarious trade because of orientation, bad socialization processes and poor moral upbringing, which make them to value money more than human beings. They indulge in the crime because of the gain in it, despite the pain and the danger it poses to the victims of trafficking and society.

Reasons for Human Trafficking

The various reasons for trafficking in our society are as follows:

i. **Greed:** Some people want to make money without minding the means. Consequently, they trade in their fellow human beings without minding that humans are not commodities for sale. Greed is an excessive desire to acquire or possess more than what one needs or desires, especially with respect to material things. It can also be described as being controlled by material things such as power, food, cloth, money etc. due to greed and the quest for better lifestyles, young people easily fall prey to traffickers who promise them better jobs away from home. Some people are so greedy that they sell their children to enrich themselves, to them once it involves money, it does not matter what article of trade is involved, they want a life of luxury. Also, there are women who go to abroad for prostitution and are fully aware of what they are going into. They believe they can do that by earning hard currency in Europe or Saudi Arabia which they can convert to a lot of local currency to satisfy their greed. They ignore the value of life for which African people are known for.

ii. **Peer Pressure:** According to Ukpene (2017), Peer groups exert so much influence on their mates. Adolescents greatly influence one another and paint a beautiful picture of the gains of working and living abroad and consequently cause them to fall victims of human trafficking. Children fall victim to child trafficking because of lack of alternative opportunities within their impoverished home communities. They often seek out traffickers on their own volition and are thus recruited.

iii. **Moral Decadence:** The level of moral decadence in our society today is alarming. The fear of God is no longer there, hence some women, even mothers, move to abroad to establish human trafficking network to enrich themselves.

iv. **Poverty:** Most victims of trafficking are usually people who are impoverished and find it absolutely difficult to meet their basic needs for sustainable living. They easily fall prey to the traffickers Garba, Muazu and Kamal (2012). Posit that poverty is a major factor responsible for trafficking in Nigeria, it cannot be denied that abject poverty, unpleasant economy, unemployment, massive retrenchments, under employment and poor quality of life has made parents who would have been most caring and loving, to neglect and even sometimes, abuse their children. Some families are living from hand to mouth as a result of insufficient income to cater for their families. They are out of job or business either as a result of retirement, retrenchment, or lack of capital as a result they lack money to settle the children's school fees rent and feeding. That is a perfect situation of parents and children who fall victim of promises of a good time abroad with the prospect of earning foreign currency that will be converted to naira (Nigerian currency) back home in Nigeria. Dagaci (2016) avails that despite that Nigeria has enormous natural and human resources as well as the largest oil producer in Africa and the eleventh largest oil producer in the world, with about two-third of her population are living in rural areas without basic social amenities such as electricity, road, hospital, schools, good drinking water etc and earning less than ₦1000 per day. There is massive youth unemployment

and a general lack of opportunities for economic ventures, low standards of living and devalued local currencies; these results in the failure to meet to health, food, housing and security needs of the people.

Unemployment

Garba Muazu Kamal (2012) states that lack of employment is one of the greatest factors which force many people in Nigeria to pursue employment in other places. Somebody who has no economic resources can easily be lured by the dream of better livelihood and may easily be trapped by traffickers. Unaware of the possible consequences such people will often consent to travel through undocumented migration routes to affluent cities and countries and are in the process caught up either domestic or international human trafficking. Unemployment in Nigeria has always been high. Every year many young people graduate from secondary and higher institutions with no employment. After years of working the street in search for non-existent jobs they are ready to go anywhere to do anything, just as long as they can be gainfully employed.

Ukpene (2012) states that the scourge of unemployment in Nigeria has generated so much desire among youths to migrate to foreign countries in search of the golden fleece. Most of them, especially girls, fall victims to human traffickers and end up being used in pornographic acts, as prostitutes in night clubs or drug peddlers for their boss. Some of them end up being killed and their body parts removed and sold by the traffickers for rituals.

Weak Legal Framework

According to UNESCO 2006, human trafficking has flourished due to the attitude of law enforcement and a weak legal framework which mainly focuses on trafficking for sexual exploitation. Generally, law enforcement agents are ill equipped and lack the technical know-how and gender sensitivity to handle cases. Trafficked persons often allege that some Nigerian officials collude with traffickers by assisting them with forged documents and then facilitate their movement across borders and through ports. Law enforcement agents are usually reluctant to investigate violent crimes, especially those against women and children who are unable to pay the costs of investigation.

Lack of Information

According to UNESCO 2006, traffickers usually recruit the vulnerable with promises of better conditions elsewhere. The typical bait is a job opportunity with higher earnings than those available in the local community. Traffickers also use the opportunity of further education or the acquisition of skills. They promise potential marriage or guarantee jobs overseas, mostly in the informal and unregulated sectors, such as hairdressers, nannies, or domestic service. In the case of children, traffickers approach their families in rural communities with promises of education, better living conditions and lucrative jobs. The traffickers or their agents sometimes give incentives such as money or clothes. The majority of trafficked persons are unaware of the forms of labor to which they will be subjected to. Most people trafficked to Europe for prostitution did not

foresee entry into the sex industry. In fact most of the women and girls trafficked to Italy were In-fact shocked by the nature of the job they had to perform there. As for the trafficked persons who were aware of the nature of their job they were either ignorant or failed to anticipate their lack of freedom or the extreme conditions of servitude and human rights abuse they were to encounter. This ignorance is enhancing the escalation of human trafficking in Nigeria.

Need for Low-Skilled Labor

UNESCO 2006 posit that human trafficking is the underside of globalization". Globalization has created powerful market demand for cheap. Low-skilled labourers in sectors such as agriculture, food processing, construction, domestic service, labour intensive manufacturing, home health care, sex work, the service sector in general, and the entertainment sector. Such demand exists in both industrialized and developing countries. Trafficked labourers are used to work in sectors where it is easier to maintain highly exploitative working conditions that are gross violations of human rights, in locations and conditions that are difficult to monitor.

The Consequences of Human Trafficking

The consequences of human trafficking are as follows:

1. Trafficking leaves the victims with psychological, social and health problems which can lead to death.
2. Victims of human trafficking are exposed to human rights violation, destitution, arrest, detention, imprisonment and deportation.
3. They lacked the information on their legal rights to defend themselves.
4. Victims trafficked internationally are unable to communicate with people due to language barrier.
5. They have no access to basic necessities of life such as safety, food, sleep, good shelter and health care.
6. Trafficked people are usually isolated from their social circles.
7. As trafficking is based on exploitation of people, all victims suffer physical, psychological and social distressed.
8. They equally experience harsh impacts due to excessive work or the use of force by traffickers.
9. Victims who have been sexually assaulted may contract HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases which may lead to untimely death.
10. The victims suffer from anxiety, insecurity, fear, trauma for prostitution have often be stigmatized by friends and family members when they returned.

The Role of Religion in Expunging Human Trafficking

Religion permits every aspect of human behaviour. It is ail embracing because of its ability to inculcate moral virtues such as good human relation, maintenance of law and order and social justice. Religion drills people in the life of spirituality that respects human life and nature.

Religion harnesses social and economic lifestyle which fosters God's reverence in every aspect of our lives, truthful dealing with one another, trust and dependence on each other and the pursue of love, justice as well as peaceful coexistence which will stamp out human trafficking. Lack of moral virtues makes people see and treat others as less than human beings by trafficking them like commodity consequently depriving their victims of the basic needs of life and subjecting them to untold hardship reducing their self respect and their sense of dignity to nothingness.

Negligence of moral and religious instructions in schools and in the society led to moral decadence in Nigeria which is responsible for human trafficking with its consequences. Religion is a force that can be used to curb this vice because it plays the role of inward conviction which will exert the strongest influence upon all citizens of the nation. Religion inculcates moral discipline into individuals which will help in eradicating this vice in the society. It provides inspirations required by Nigerians to unanimously fight against these vice. All the Nigerian citizens must adhere to religious tenets to enable it produce total transformation of their lives which will bring sanity to the society.

Conclusion

The menace of human trafficking is damaging, disastrous and devastating to the victims the families and the society at large. Human trafficking is a crime and a canker worm that is eating into the fabric of the nation because it denies thousands of people their basic human rights, poses a serious public health risk and fuels organized crime around the world. Human trafficking can only be eliminated through religious studies and a combined efforts at regional, national and international levels. The world must stop the criminals and terrorists from trafficking human beings as a source of income.

Recommendations

1. Government should provide employment opportunities for the youth and create an enabling environment for the private sector to invest and increase employment opportunities. This will include provision of infrastructure such as electricity, water, road, and communication facilities.
2. The religious bodies and government should liaise together in the inculcation of good morals into the populace in order to eradicate human trafficking.
3. Government should lay more emphasis on the teaching of religious studies at all levels of education to inculcate good morals into the masses in order to stop human trafficking.
4. Religious bodies and the government should educate the masses on good human relations in order to shun human trafficking.
5. Government at all levels should ensure that the rising poverty indices is reversed and initiate programmes that will help the populace meet their basic needs.
6. The government should create public awareness of the crime, plan strategies of rescue mission, counseling, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims.

7. The women and girls who are in search of the golden fleece⁵ abroad should be properly educated on their exposure to the risk of violence, abuse and contracting the dreaded HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases that will lead to untimely death.

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