Sociological Determinants and Consequences of Irregular Migration, Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery in Nigeria

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Review Article

ABSTRACT

In Nigeria, the prevalence of irregular migration, human trafficking, and modern slavery reflects a socio-political deficiencies and a pure socio-economic imbalance between the rich and the poor. As a result, this study investigated the determinants and consequences of irregular migration, human trafficking, and modern slavery in Nigeria in the context of national and international perspectives. Several variables were believed to be determining factors of these events based on what is apparent in the existing literature reviewed, including poverty, low standard of living, insecurity, wealth disparity, leadership flaws, and a low level of education. This paper then concludes that, given the globalising nature of these events (irregular migration, human trafficking, and modern

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slavery), it would be extraordinarily impossible for any single country to adequately address the tremendous consequences emanating from these social events.

Keywords: Irregular migration; modern-day slavery; sociology; human trafficking.

1. INTRODUCTION

The nature of the globalising world has made country-to-country contacts considerably easier than before modernity. The relationship that exists between different countries of the world may be found in practically every field of human endeavours, including politics, economy, security, and health. Among the various connections that appear immoral and contrary to international relationship standards is the criminal relationship, which has exposed several cross-border criminal empires dealing in drugs, illegal ammunition, people trafficking, cybercrime, and money laundering, among others. The objective of this paper is centred on the determinants and consequences of irregular migration, human trafficking and modern day slavery relying exclusively on existing literatures. For the purpose of directionality, this paper focused exclusively on the sociological examination of the determinants and consequences of irregular migration, human trafficking, and modern-day slavery in Nigeria using secondary source materials.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper relied heavily on secondary data obtained from research articles and books focusing on migration, irregular migration, human trafficking and modern-day slavery with emphasis on it cause and consequences. Furthermore, grey literatures such as website comments were used to support the paper's arguments.

3. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS: IRREGULAR MIGRATION, HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MODERN SLAVERY

The need for conceptual clarification in an academic exercise of this nature cannot be neglected as it will help to understand the meaning and interpretation given to different concepts at any point in time. And more importantly, concepts in social science have no static definition based on the complexity and diversities of social variables that is why clear definition of concept is important in this regard.

3.1 Irregular Migration

What exactly is irregular migration? To fully comprehend the meaning of irregular migration, it is critical to first define migration as a concept. Migration has been defined in various ways by various scholars, but the most common is that of the United Nations (2013), which defines migration as the movement of individuals from one geographical location to another, involving permanent or temporary residence or settlement due to natural disasters, physical conditions, security challenges, differences in socioeconomic opportunities, and changes in social status. Irregular Migration, on the other hand, is a relatively new term for those who migrate without sufficient authorization or papers.

However, irregular migration is one of the world's fastest rising kinds of migration, posing significant issues for many destination countries [1,2]. Thus, it includes people who enter a country without proper authorization, such as clandestine entry and/or entry with fake documents; people who remain in a country in defiance of their authority, such as those moved by migrant smugglers or human traffickers; and those who intentionally abuse the asylum system [3]. The International Organization for Migration (2014) defines irregular migration as movement that occurs outside of the regulatory standards of the sending, transit, and receiving countries. According to the descriptions above, irregular migration is a clandestine movement of people from one geographical place, mainly less developed societies, to more developed societies with the goal to labour and living without authorisation.

3.2 Human Trafficking

Trafficking in persons or human trafficking according to Monde-Anumihe [4], are some of the fastest growing areas of international criminal activity, according to the United Nations. It often involves a number of different crimes, spanning across several countries, and involving an increasing number of victims. It is often characterized as the exploitation of people through force, coercion, threat, and deception and includes human rights abuses such as debt

bondage, deprivation of liberty, and lack of control over freedom and labour. "Human Trafficking can be for purposes of sexual exploitation or labour exploitation" [5,6]. In furtherance to this, human trafficking has been seen as the most heinous crime on the international border and some intellectuals are of the conception that human trafficking is synonymous to international slave trade of the past as it is sometimes referred to as international modern day slavery.

It is important to note at this junction, that human trafficking occurs in different dimensions and is caused by varieties of factors which will be discussed later in this paper. Observing the dynamics of human trafficking, one will come to the conclusion that majority of the victims are women and girls based on the definition put forward by the UN palermo protocol; Trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of 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. 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, servitude or the removal of organs which is referred to as organ trafficking.

3.3 Modern Slavery

Modern slavery like every other inhuman practice in the 21st century has their genesis prior to industrialization. Flashing back to the pre-modern era, Slavery was a common practice in most ancient cultures and civilizations. At present, however, old forms of slavery have continued to disappear as they have been replaced by a more dreaded trend called "modern slavery". Modern slavery remains rampant in many parts of the world, particularly in Africa. This constitutes one of the major continents confronted with the scourges. Modern slavery is considered a form of reinvention of man inhumanity to humanity that characterized the dreadful transatlantic slave trade, when the Europeans forcibly uprooted millions of people throughout West Africa and Central Africa and shipped them across the Atlantic in conditions of grave cruelty like horse and dogs.

The Global Slavery Index of the Walk Free foundation, Australia, describes modern slavery as a hidden crime which includes slavery as customarily understood, human trafficking, forced labour and "slavery-like practices" such as debt bondage, forced marriages and sale or exploitation of children [7]. "The victims of modern slavery are the underprivileged people such as the poor, unemployed, refugees, illegal immigrants, illiterate persons, homeless persons, orphans and other disadvantaged people from the low-income countries of the world" [8]. The phenomenon of modern slavery does not only fits into the international narratives of human trafficking but should also be addressed from the national level such as forced marriages, child labour, baby factory, gendered kidnapping and so on. We believe everyone; everywhere has the right to a life free from slavery. But right now, millions of children and adults are trapped in slavery in every single country in the world including ours.

Modern slavery is the severe exploitation of other people for personal or commercial gain. It is all around us, but often just out of sight. People can become entrapped making our clothes, serving our food, picking our crops, working in factories, or working in houses as cooks, cleaners or nannies. From the outside, it can look like a normal job. But people are being controlled, they can face violence or threats, be forced into inescapable debt, or have had their passport taken away and are being threatened with deportation especially for those who have been trafficked abroad. Many have fallen into this oppressive trap simply because they were trying to escape poverty or insecurity, improve their lives and support their families. Now, they can't leave. From the above descriptive definition of modern slavery, a conclusive assessment of this definition can be brought under one simple explanation by looking at modern slavery as a modern form of the primitive known slavery which denies individual their basic and fundamental human right as a result of their inability to cope with certain socio-economic conditions like low level of income, lack of education and poor standard of living.

4. DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION IN NIGERIA

The nature of the global world has made movement inevitable for man as there would always be need for human to human physico-

social interaction. The need for man to move from one geographical location to another has made international migration a difficult endeavour with its accompanied regulations and due processes. It is as a result of these difficulties that man begins to migrate illegally or unauthoritatively. Irregular migration as a global phenomenon is caused by many factors. Going through the existing literature, many studies have identified social, economic, political, cultural factors as determinants of irregular migration among African youths specifically Nigeria. For instance, the United Nations, (2006) report stipulates that for people to migrate, three factors must be present. These are: demand (pull), supply (push) and network (links demand and supply) factors. In the absence of one of these, migration from one place to another will not occur. Thus, economic and political conditions provide the general context within which international migration occurs.

In the general meeting held by the African Union in 2006 as cited in Ayuba, [9] identified various political and social factors which induce migration. Among these are bad leadership style, corruption, social unrest, human rights violations, political instability, environmental factors, ethno-religious conflicts and civil discord in the countries of origin. On the other hand, the real or perceived opportunity for a better life, high income, greater security of life and property, better quality of health care facilities and quality education at the destinations induce migration. Other factors identified were improved transportation system which invariably lowers the costs of movements; improved communication system, greater information availability and the need to join relatives are among the factors, which amplify push-pull factors (AU, 2006). Agreeing with the AU's assertion, a more recent statistics by the UN (2013) identified employment, education, marriage, and escape from poverty, violence, conflict and environmental change as the key determinants of irregular migration, particularly among the youths in Nigeria.

Another key factor that facilitates irregular migration in Nigeria as identified in the literature is pervasive poverty. Although there are divergent opinions as to whether or not irregular migration is carried out by the poor people only. Ehirim, et al. [10], posited that "poverty may be the main cause of irregular migration in some parts of the world and under certain conditions, whereas in other parts, under different conditions

the poor will be among the last to move. This finding suggests that migration, regardless of its type, involves the ability to mobilize resources; and as such the poorest are not likely to engage in irregular migration to Europe. It was also observed that a large number of the irregular migrants originate from the rural areas particularly in the developing countries". For instance, the UN report (2013) revealed that despite the lack of reliable data on internal migrants, it is assumed that 40% of the migrants originated from the rural areas and many of them are youth with high propensity to migrate [11]. The Nigerian rural poor, particularly the youths, have been identified with using migration as a survival strategy [12]. However, while these factors may be true reflections of facilitators of rural-urban migration, irregular migration from developing countries to developed countries tend to be the outcome of other more powerful forces such as wide gap in the level of human security and socioeconomic prosperity. Also, the high increase in education and professional skills among young Africans have made them vulnerable to migration to countries where opportunities abound for them to exhibit their skills and get rewarded accordingly.

"Consequent to the above, irregular migration in the continents continues unabated. Unlike the origin countries, the destination countries seem to make efforts towards stemming the tide of the irregular migration. It is estimated, for example, that in 2002 alone, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom (UK) and the USA together spent about US$17 billion in trying to respond to the problem of irregular migration" (Martin, 2003; [13]). "The phenomenon of irregular migration poses serious implications for the socioeconomic and even political development of origin, transit and destination countries. However, its direct link to human security makes it a major source of concern to various governments of developing countries. Human insecurity such as loss of lives, trafficking and/or smuggling in persons have been identified as some of the gravest problems related to irregular migration" [14].

"Thus, the actual figure of migrants, made up of men, women and even children, who perish at sea, remains unknown as most deaths go unreported and the bodies of the deceased remain unidentified" [9]. "Even less is known about those who lose their lives during the desert crossing from sub-Saharan Africa to Libya. However, available statistics reveal that globally,

most of the migrants who lost their lives are from Africa and the Middle East; 27% from sub-Saharan Africa, 19% from the Middle East and North Africa, 13% from the Horne of Africa, excluding migrants whose countries of origin remain unknown" [7]. This, therefore, shows that the existing figures may greatly underestimate the real number of dead migrants, considering the number of people who go missing and are never found.

"These migratory trends have grave social consequences on the irregular migrants, their countries of origin as well as the destination countries" [9]. "One of such negative effects on the migrants is the fact that, even when they succeed in getting to their desired destinations, most of them fall victims of racial attacks as the case in Libya and xenophobic attacks in South Africa. Others get involved in criminal activities such as drug peddling, cybercrime, prostitution, human trafficking etc. and consequently pay the ultimate price with their lives or simply get jailed in European and Asian prisons" [15]. "This in turn affects the foreign image of their countries of origin (Nigeria). Even though this trend is not peculiar to the Nigerian migrants who get to Europe or Asia via illegal routes, it is however, common among Nigerian migrants abroad who might have entered legally but remained in their host countries after the expiration of their visas. For instance, many sportsmen and women, musicians and even pilgrims to Saudi Arabia and Israel have bolted away in their countries of destination with the intention of making it in the foreign lands" [15].

5. DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQU-ENCES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

It is no doubt that human trafficking is an unacceptable standard of international relationship which exposes women and girls to an extreme form of commercial sex engagement that requires them to sell their body without their own consent; its presence must not be ignored as it appears to be a grave violation of human rights, depriving a person of her right to life, liberty, security and self-determination. The fundamental individual right to life, liberty and security of person is reflected in article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Engaging in human trafficking as an organized form of criminal activities does not happen without some

facilitating tendencies (determinants). Several determining factors has been identified as responsible for trafficking in person, the most common and well-articulated determinants of human trafficking lies between two extremes; poverty and corruption . Poverty as a cause is linked to the perpetrators and agents of human trafficking while corruption is linked to how the crime became a successful endeavor by the perpetrators without being caught.

The important thing to be considered in the relationship between poverty and corruption as determinants of human trafficking as acclaimed by Ayuba [9] is that "Corruption fuels poverty and poverty fuels corruption". He further reiterates that the cycle is as perpetual as it is vicious. Even as the world's eighth largest exporter of crude oil in the world, Nigeria is among the poorest countries in West Africa. It is also one of the countries with the greatest social inequality. The 2010 Human Development Report conducted by the United Nations Development Programme introduced the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which identifies multiple deprivations in the same households in education, health and standard of living. The most recent survey data available for estimating MPI figures for Nigeria were collected in 2008. In Nigeria 54.1 percent of the population lived in multidimensional poverty while an additional 17.8 percent were vulnerable to multiple deprivations. "The intensity of deprivation, or the average percentage of deprivation experienced by people living in multidimensional poverty in Nigeria, was 57.3 percent. The Country's MPI value, which is the share of the population that is multi-dimensionally poor, adjusted by the intensity of the deprivations, was 0.31" [16].

Inferring from the above, it is clear that poverty is one of the leading problem ravaging the territorial integrity of Nigeria as a country and as such, the poor Nigerians who can no longer bear the outcome of poverty has devise means through illegal connection with people outside the country for the supply and illegal trafficking of their fellow poor Nigerian citizens especially women and girls for sex work, forced labour, drug pushing and some other heinous activities for which they will be paid for. The success of human trafficking has a huge linkage with corruption, because transporting humans through any means is not an easy task in a sane society except if such activity is aided by some high-ranking corrupt personalities. The corruption in Nigeria affects many parts of society and takes some

surprising forms. All of these forms of corruption can facilitate the practice of human trafficking.

The 2005 Council of Europe report titled "Trafficking in Human Beings and Corruption" suggests that opportunities for corruption can also exist within the trafficking chain and the criminal justice chain. "The trafficking chain consists of the recruitment of victims, the provision of documentation (identity papers, visas, and permits), the transport of victims, which may include border crossing, their exploitation, as well as the laundering of the proceeds of the crime. Corrupt actors within this chain of activities may include police, customs officers, embassies, consulates, border control authorities, immigration services, other law enforcement agencies, intelligence, security forces, armed forces (national or international), local officials, persons/groups/parties with influence on public officials, as well as private sector actors, such as travel agencies, airlines, the transportation sector, financial institutions, banks, etc. Corrupt acts include ignoring, tolerating, participating in and organizing trafficking in persons, ranging from violation of duties or corruption and involvement in organized crime" [17]. "It is worthy of note to state that Researchers also cite factors such as rural-urban migration, unemployment, poor living conditions, peer influence and the collapse of the family institution. Within the Nigerian context, the primary causes of trafficking in women are unemployment and the low socio-economic status of women, especially in parts of Edo and Delta states where it thrives" [9]. The disparity in Nigeria is only exacerbated by its rapidly growing population disproportionately affecting women.

"Given the heinous conditions that victims of human trafficking are exposed to, it is unsurprising that they suffer from a large amount of negative repercussions even after being rescued and returning home" [18]. Women forced into prostitution may experience a variety of medical difficulties, including sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS), menstruation abnormalities, and other genital related problems as a result of physical violence experienced in brothels. However, many of the physical consequences begin much earlier: during transit, victims are sometimes confined in extremely tight and filthy quarters, which can lead to disease outbreaks and spread [17]. "Unplanned and unwanted pregnancies are also common as a result of unprotected and forced sexual intercourse, and the result of this is never in the woman's favour: even if victims are given the option to abort, they will most likely be denied access to safe and trusted healthcare. Abortions on their own can result in lasting, psychological trauma for the woman, particularly if they are ordered by the trafficker since it's yet another way they've lost control over their body. Other tactics traffickers use to subdue victims include starvation, beatings, and other forms of physical and sexual trauma which can lead to a host of physical injuries, such as brain trauma, burns, bruises, and broken bones" [18].

6. DETERMINANTS AND CONSEQU-ENCES OF MODERN SLAVERY NIGERIA

In the twenty-first century, one of the greatest challenges confronting humanity is the phenomenon of "modern day slavery" [19]. This form of slavery is called modern based on it time of occurrence, according to intellectuals, it is a replica of the then trans-Atlantic slave trade and among its peculiar feature is the denial and disregards for human rights and dignity [20]. "Nigeria is a major source, transit, and destination country for women and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking" [12]. "Although Nigeria is not the poorest country in Africa as poverty remains the major cause of modern slavery and in fact Nigeria is ranked as the largest economy in Africa in the 2018 Forbes Africa report, the prevalence of victims of modern slavery in Nigeria depicts a puzzle that necessitates a degree of understanding the drivers of modern slavery in the country. Nigeria, with a population of over 170 million is estimated to have 875,500 numbers of people in modern slavery" [8]. Nigeria is battling serious challenges of both internal and transnational modern slavery.

It is no doubt that scholars have looked into the determining factors of modern slavery but the most inclusive of these factors is found in the document of Global Slavery Index, [7] that modern slavery is determined by five factors which include level of economic and social development in a country; national policies to combat modern slavery; availability of human rights protections; level of state stability; and the extent of women's rights and levels of discrimination in a country. Nigeria is particularly vulnerable to modern slavery given the dismal state of these crucial factors in the country.

Nigeria has been battling numerous ethno-religious and communal conflicts, attacks which constitute a major security problem that increase the citizen's vulnerability to modern slavery. Aside the insecurity problem, structural problems of widespread poverty, high levels of social inequality, corruption, financial crisis, poor human rights records and gender discriminations are among the major push factors that compel people, particularly women and children, to migrate from poorer areas to wealthier regions within Nigeria for menial jobs (house help, cleaner, nannies, and so on) and to the African continent and most especially, to Western countries (Kiss et al., 2022).

More worrisome is the behaviour found among many poor household or families in Nigeria, in their efforts to survive or make ends means, many of them may resort to exposing their young girls into early hustle or give out their young children as domestic servants to well to do people, which inevitably expose the children to the risk of modern slavery [21,22]. This awkward behavioural pattern found among Nigerian parents is one among the markers of the genesis of modern slavery in Nigeria. Another determinant of modern slavery is the porosity of Nigerian borders that allowed human traffickers to cross borders with their victims undetected. Direct observation at Nigerian borders also showed that Nigerian immigration officers usually collect bribe and allow people without any mode of identification to cross border. The laxity in border controls, corrupt practices and lack of specialized training for police and border guards, allow trafficking to thrive with limited risks to their operations.

"Consequent upon the above is that many of the trafficked victims are exposed to dangerous conditions that may lead to their untimely death before they reach their destinations, which not only cut short their lives but also erode any contribution they could have made to human capital development in Nigeria" [23,24]. For those who survived the dangerous route, in their countries of destination they faced inhuman treatment from their traffickers who maltreated them mentally and physically through rape, beating, drug abuse, starvation, confinement and seclusion so as to keep them in perpetual servitude [22]. Narrating the plight of victims as cited in Babatunde, [19] that a social worker assisting illegal migrants disclosed that "sex is traded just like money, to bribe border guards or police [25,26]."

7. CONCLUSION

Arising from the above, it is clear that the phenomenon of irregular migration, human trafficking and modern slavery are caused by several social factors ranging from poverty, poor standard of living, insecurity, wealth disparity, leadership deficiencies, and low level of education. These among many factors have been observed as the determinants of irregular migration, human trafficking and modern day slavery in Nigeria and as such, the consequences are greatly felt both in the country of Origin (Nigeria) and the country of destinations. Considering the globalizing nature of these crimes, it would undoubtedly be difficult for any single country to effectively combat the enormous challenges of these heinous criminal activities, particularly developing countries like Nigeria where there is inadequate economic capacity, insecurity and other socio-cultural vices.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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