

The Fight Against the Despicable Scourges of Child Trafficking for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Role of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP): A Review of Literature

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Abstract

One of the contemporary social Issues which are posing serious threats to the attainment of a vibrant sustainable development in Nigeria is the child trafficking and it is rapidly spreading like a wild fire cutting across the geopolitical zones of the country which are for example, the north-west, north-central, north-east, south-west, south-south as well as the south-east. The trafficking of the child can be considered as a crime against humanity. This is however in view of the fact that the article titled The Fight Against the Despicable Scourges of Child Trafficking for Sustainable Development in Nigeria: The Role of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters examined a plethora of factors which were considered as the critical causes of child trafficking in Nigeria, their actual consequences and the way forward for a laudable sustainable development in the country. It was observed that some of the causes of child trafficking identified in the article were for example, the poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, divorce, separation, inadequate social security and also, lack of adequate community support and policing. However, with regard to the consequences of child trafficking in Nigeria, clear explanations were offered. These comprised for example, the hindrance of the physical, psychological and the mental development of the child; loss of parental love and care of the child; poor health condition of the child, lack of access to quality educational development of the child, the juvenile delinquency and other crimes and lastly, the withdrawal of foreign aids. However, the article was underpinned by a theoretical framework known as the Parson's famous AGIL SCHEME which was rooted in the structural functionalism, a classical sociological perspective. The article also contained the conclusion and the recommendations.

Background to the Study

The fight against the despicable scourges of child trafficking in Nigeria by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) is an indispensable striving by the agency to clear away or if possible, to bring an end to the social problem of child trafficking in the Nigerian societies. It is a well-known fact the business of trafficking of children is one of the violation of inalienable human rights in the world today involving millions of children worldwide. Every year, the children are smuggled across borders and are sold like commodities; others are also trafficked within their home countries usually from the rural to urban areas. It has been critically observed that trafficking isolates the human rights guaranteed to children under the international law most especially the United Nations Conventions on the rights of the child and today, the children's survival and development are threatened and their rights to education, health and protection, are denied (NAPTIP, 2018).

Child trafficking is evidenced within all the regions in Africa and Nigeria is not an exception which as a result of that, the report which covers fifty-three (53) African nations says that the children are the biggest victims of trafficking and it also described how they are forced into slavery, and reunited as child soldiers or sold into prostitutions (BBC News, 23 April, 2014). Child trafficking is often in two directions and Nigeria, for example, has received trafficked people from African countries and the trafficked Nigerians have been found in a dozen countries too. There used to be several factors which are primarily responsible for child trafficking in, Nigeria and the examples here, include the poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, divorce, separation, inadequate social security, inadequate community policing and support etc. Therefore, it can be asserted that the business of child trafficking in Nigeria is a heinous social problem that can be said to be intertwined, clandestine and secretive in nature and hence the need for the holistic approaches in interventions.

Conceptual Elucidations

The operationalization of the meanings of the following concepts is fundamentally important in the article:

1. Child Trafficking

Within the context of this article, a child is a young human being who is below the age of eighteen (18) years. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Sociology by Scott and Marshal, 2005 the term child can be used to mean either an offspring or someone who has not reached full economic and social status as an adult in a society and the definition further elucidates that the individuals in the later state are passing through an age related period known as childhood. However, this is further corroborated by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Charter of Rights and the Welfare of the Child 1999 in article I which states that a child means "every human being who is below the ages of eighteen (18) years. The child trafficking, therefore, is defined as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receiving of children for the purpose of exploitation. It is further explained that, a child can be said to be trafficked if he or she has been moved within a country or across the borders whether by force or not and with purpose of exploiting the child (International Labour Organization, 1999).

2. NAPTIP

The acronym “NAPTIP” simply means National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters. The NAPTIP is an agency or organization that was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria around the year 2003 to coordinate all the laws regarding the child trafficking in the country and arrest the perpetrators of child trafficking by making them to be arraigned by any independent impartial court of law in the country so that social control and conformity could be attained. The targeted goal is to assist and correct the behaviours of the perpetrators of child trafficking to be socially responsible thereby contributing to the socio-economic and the political development of Nigeria as a nation.

3. Sustainable Development

The Bruntland Commission (1987), defined Sustainable Development as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs”. It should, therefore, be noted that, the attainment of sustainable development is a desire that each and every country of the world is aspiring to achieve. In the case of Nigeria, for example, the Federal Government perceived the business of child trafficking as a great social problem that seriously obstructs the smooth progress and development of the country as a nation. There are some factors responsible for child trafficking and to illustrate, these are poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, divorce, separation, inadequate social security and inadequate community policing and support. It was in view of all these challenges that, the Federal Government of Nigeria decided to fight against the despicable scourges of child trafficking for a prosperous sustainable development through the giant strides efforts of an organization popularly known as the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and the other Related Matters (NAPTIP).

Theoretical Framework

This article employs the Parson's famous AGIL scheme which is part of the Structural Functionalism, a classical sociological theory. According to Talcot Parsons (1937), The AGIL scheme or system entails the Functional Pre-requisites of the society that is to say; the actual functions which are anticipated to be performed by a human society for it to be existing and keep on sustainably surviving and in the absence of those functional pre-requisites, the society can easily crumble and decay. Therefore, the clear interpretation of the acronym AGIL is as follows: The A stands for Adaptation G stands for Goal Attainment, I stand for Integration and L stands for Latency. Adaptation, for Parsons, has to do with the challenge of extracting natural resources from the environment and also, how they should be distributed for the survival of the members of the society. It is the economy that performs this function in our modern industrial societies (Alubo, 2016). The Goal Attainment entails how the priorities should be placed on the efficient utilization of resources considering the fact that the human societies have distinct goals and needs which they want to achieve for development. The polity performs this function in our modern industrial societies (Alubo, 2016). The next item under the Parson's AGIL system is the integration. It is the process of bringing about the different parts of the societies in an

interwoven and interconnect manner for development and a striking example of this is bringing deviants and criminals to justice and also maintaining a good social relationship among the various ethnic, religious and racial groups in order ensure social control and conformity in the society. The Law Enforcement Agencies such as for example, the police, the civil defence, the courts of law and prisons perform this function in the society. However, the media also perform similar function. Lastly, there is the latency. It is the process of ensuring that, the existing norms, values, knowledge and technology are taught to the younger generation (Alubo, 2016). It should be noted that, the institutions of the society that perform the latency function include for example, the family, the religion the school/education etc (Alubo, 2016).

With regard to the application of the Parson's AGIL scheme to the Nigerian Scenario, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), is an agency that was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) and it always tries to cope with the external situational exigencies by encompassing the needs of the society and what the societies need from them. Secondly, the NAPTIP's goals are defined and they are focused towards attaining the primary goal of minimizing or possibly eradicating the trafficking in persons. Thirdly, the NAPTIP tries and attempts to manage the relationship among other functional imperatives that try to attain the goal of eradicating the perils of child trafficking in the Nigerian Societies and here for example, the Criminal Justice System which includes the Police, the Civil Defence, the Courts and the Prisons have a fundamental role to play. Fourthly, the NAPTIP punishes the traffickers, rehabilitates the victims and also renew both the motivation of the individuals and the cultural patterns that create and sustain the motivation so that there could be social control, conformity, progress and the development of the Nigerian societies.

Causes of Child Trafficking in Nigeria

Child trafficking is a serious social problem that is threatening the attainment of sustainable development in Nigeria. It occurs as a result of some factors and the key ones here, are the entrenched poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, divorce, separation, inadequate social security and also the inadequate community policing and support. The explanations for these causes are as follows:

Poverty

According to Damma (2014), poverty can be characterized as a state of deprivation, dependence and regulation below the physically and the socio-culturally acceptable standards and it is however associated with a level of living below a set of norms held necessary for human beings. It has been researched that poverty is one of the factors responsible for child trafficking and this is in view of the fact that, there are several Nigerian families who are living in the abject poverty which as a result of that, they lack the basic necessities of life which are for example, the nutritious food, comfortable shelter, good clothes, quality healthcare, proper and sound education that is flexible, affordable, accessible and also convenient. All these conditions have contributed in no small measure in making the parents to allow their children to become easily vulnerable victims in the hands of the wicked and unsympathetic traffickers in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2016, NAPTIP, 2018, Boyi, 2011).

1. Illiteracy and Ignorance

These are part of the factors responsible for child trafficking in different parts of Nigeria. In the context of this article, the illiteracy is all about the inability of an individual or person to read and write and on the other hand, the ignorance is lack of knowledge or information about something. Some researches indicated that there were about six million Nigerians including boys and the girls who do not attend schools while one million of them are forced to drop out due to a factor for example, like the poor family income and in addition to that, over eight million Nigerian children at least, partly stay in schools to pay for their education fees (UNICEF, 2006). Coupled with that, there were also many parents who were greatly ignorant of the value of education that their children are anticipated to have so that they could be socially responsible in the society but their parents turned them to fall prey in the disgustingly dirty hands of the notorious traffickers (USAID, 2014).

2. Divorce

This is one of the factors responsible for child trafficking in Nigeria. A divorce normally occurs as a result of social misunderstanding between the husband and wife leading to the repudiation of the marriage contract or an end to it. Divorce normally occurs as a result of some factors which include male impotence, infidelity, the growing incompatibility between the husband and wife, the interference of the parents or in-laws, the increasing poverty and hard labour in the family, the cruelty from either the husband or wife (Otitte and Ogionwo, 2006). A research indicated that in a situation whereby the husband and wife are divorced, the family would be broken and collapsed thereby exposing the members especially the children to the dangers of the business of trafficking of the children (USAID, 2015).

3. Separation

The separation is one of the factors contributing to the rapid development of the business of child trafficking in Nigeria and it is an issue that happens when the couple, that is the husband and wife are no longer staying together as a result of the fact that, they are working in different geographical areas. When such kind of situation is happening, it was critically observed that, the marital couple would not have adequate time of taking good care of their children thereby helping them to be socially responsible in the society. The separation of the wife and the husband seriously exposed the children to the harmful effects of child trafficking in Nigeria (Bello, 2010; Mojeed, 2016).

4. Inadequate Social Security

It is a well-known fact that, social insecurity has been one of the perennial social problems which are threatening the socio-economic and the political development of Nigeria as a nation and the problem also cuts across different parts of the country. Social insecurity occurs in different forms such as the Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, cattle rustling, the armed banditry, etc. As a result of the occurrence of social insecurity in the country, many lives and properties were greatly lost and also numerous families were completely shattered and broken leading to the exposure of the family members to street begging, the child trafficking and other social problems that could render the human lives useless (Oloromadi, 2017; Popoola, 2008).

5. Inadequate Community Policing and Support

This is also one of the causes of child trafficking in Nigeria. The community policing in the article has to do with the efforts of the police and the members of the community in combating crimes and other social problems that could retard the development of the society. It was observed that the level of community policing and support is increasingly becoming very low in our Nigerian societies and that was the reason why the business of child trafficking is worsening up very exceedingly in the country (Ilo, 2013). This also means that, all the efforts need to be intensified to fight against the despicable scourges of child trafficking in Nigeria so as to restore normalcy. In the previous years, gigantic efforts have been made by the Federal Government of Nigeria to stem the tide of child trafficking in the country (Human Rights Watch, 2013).

Consequences of Child Trafficking in Nigeria

It is worthy of note that, the children which have been trafficked in Nigeria are greatly significant considering the fact that they have a fundamental role to play towards bringing about the socio-economic, political and the religious development of Nigeria as a nation. Child trafficking is characterized by some consequences.

According to Redda (2010), the following are the consequences of child trafficking in Nigeria:

a. Hindrance of Physical, Psychological and Mental Development of a Child

The business of child trafficking in Nigeria contributes adversely in hindering the physical, psychological and the mental development of numerous children who have been trafficked by the perpetrators of the business. The trafficked children used to be exposed to certain unfavourable and adversely dilapidated conditions of life such as for example, stunted growth, bodily pressure, fatigue, malnutrition, etc. (Redda, 2010, Sambo and Mshelia, 2017). All these, further worsen up the conditions of bio-social, political and economic development of a child in the society.

b. Loss of Parental Love

Researches indicated that, the child domestic servants abandon their homes and cope with other adults that are not their parents and the resultant consequence is that, the child may not have the parental love and care considering the fact that he/she would be working like a working machine to satisfy the needs of the members of the family (Redda, 2010, Okafor, 2010).

c. Poor Health Condition of the Child

This is one of the consequences of child trafficking in Nigeria. Majority of the children who have been trafficked in Nigeria, have been exposed to many unpleasant poor health conditions as a result of the occurrence of diseases such as for example, malaria, pneumonia, tuberculosis, asthma, etc. It has been observed that if strong measures are not taken to improve the condition of health of the trafficked children, they could easily crumble (Redda, 2010, Ilo, 2015).

d. Lack of Access to Quality Educational Development of the Child

The children who have been trafficked do not most of the times, have access to quality knowledge and the skills that would help them to properly understand the norms, values, customs and traditions of their societies thereby contributing to their development. Most of the children being trafficked are very left behind in the sense that, they cannot fight for their rights when they are under the control of the traffickers and as a result of that, they would be rendered useless in the society (Redda, 2010, Okoye and Tanyi, 2009).

e. Juvenile Delinquency and other Crimes

The juvenile delinquency has been one of the consequences of child trafficking in Nigeria and this is owing to the fact that, the trafficked children have been found engaging in delinquency and other social vices which are not socially desirable in the society. The major reason for the delinquency of the trafficked children is because of the fact that, they are not close to their parents who are capable of providing proper and sound socialization for their development (Redda, 2010, Osment, 2014, Robson, 2010).

f. Withdrawal of Foreign Aids

The withdrawal of foreign aids is also one of the consequences of child trafficking in Nigeria. Research discovered that the withdrawal of foreign aids by the numerous rich and powerful nations of the world such as for example, the United States of America, Britain, France and others have created a situation whereby the despicable business of child trafficking in Nigeria became worsened up to the extent that the trafficked children were adversely affected. The situation further resulted in the occurrence of many undesirable social problems which do not actually aid in bringing about social control and conformity as well as the progress and development of our Nigerian societies and the problems here include smoking, gambling, prostitution, homosexuality, etc. (Redda, 2010, UNICEF, 2014, UNICEF., 2018).

The Role of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and the other Related Matters (NAPTIP) in the Fight against the Despicable Scourges of Child Trafficking for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and the other Related Matters (NAPTIP) came into being on the 26th of August, 2003 with the appointment of its pioneer executive secretary/ chief executive Mrs. Carol Ndaguba. The agency which is meant for the creation of trafficking in persons (prohibition) Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003, is the Federal Government of Nigeria's response to addressing the scourge of trafficking of persons in Nigeria and its attendant human abuses in all its ramifications. It is also a fulfillment of her international obligation under the trafficking in person's protocol supplementing the Transnational Organized Crimes convention and its trafficking in person's protocol on the 13th of December, 2000. Article 5 of the said trafficking protocol enjoins state parties to criminalize practices and conducts that subject human beings to all forms of exploitation which include the minimum sexual and labour exploitation.

The bill to implement this protocol in our National Penal Legislation was sponsored as a private member bill by Women Trafficking and Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), a non-governmental organization initiated and founded by Mrs. Titi Atiku Abubakar, the wife of the former vice president of Nigeria. The bill was subsequently passed by the National Assembly on the 7th of July, 2003 and the presidential assent given on the 14th of July, 2003.

The law seeks to address trafficking in persons with these associated problems by creating a specific multi-disciplinary crime fighting agency to address them.

To effectively tackle the problems associated with the trafficking in Persons, section 4 of the law rests in NAPTIP the following functions:

- i. To coordinate all laws on trafficking in Persons and related offences;
- ii. To adopt measures to increase the effectiveness of eradication of trafficking in Persons;
- iii. To adopt witness protection measures;
- iv. To enhance effectiveness of law enforcement agents to suppress trafficking in Persons.
- v. To establish proper communication channels, conduct research and work on improving international cooperation in the suppression of trafficking in Persons by land and sea and air;
- vi. To work in collaboration with other agencies or bodies that may ensure elimination and prevention of the root causes of the problem of traffic in any person;
- vii. To strengthen and enhance the effectiveness or the effective legal means for international activities of trafficking persons.
- viii. To take charge, supervise, control and coordinate the rehabilitation of trafficked persons;
- ix. To investigate and prosecute trafficking;

By these functions, the agency becomes the country's focal point in the fight against trafficking in persons and its associated social problems. Specialized operational departments are created by section of the law to implement the mandate of the agency. These departments are:

- i. Investigation and the prosecution:** It is meant to enforce the law by detecting, investigating and prosecuting trafficking in Person's offenders.
- ii. Counseling and Rehabilitation:** It is charged with the responsibility of care giving counseling, rehabilitation and re-invigorating the victims.
- iii. Public enlightenment:** It is to educate the public as well as the people who are being trafficked.

The Federal Government of Nigeria therefore, approved the NAPTIP office in all the thirty six (36) states of the federation and they are charged with the responsibilities of

handling all the matters related to child trafficking and other concerned issues in the country (NAPTIP, 2012).

Conclusion

Child trafficking in Nigeria is a serious issue that is adversely posing formidable threats to the attainment of sustainable development in the country and it was also noticed that the problem is now spreading like a wild fire in the country. There were numerous factors responsible for the business of child trafficking and the key factors discussed were the abject poverty, illiteracy and ignorance, divorce, separation, inadequate social security, as well as the inadequate community policing and the support. However, the consequences of child trafficking were also discussed in the articles. These were the hindrance of the physical, psychological and the mental development of the child; the loss of parental love and care of the child; the poor health condition of the child; the lack of access to quality educational development of the child; the juvenile delinquency and other crimes as well as the withdrawal of foreign aids. It was also observed in the article that the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), has been playing gigantic and indispensable roles towards curtailing the challenges of the business of child trafficking and other related matters for sustainable development in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on all the findings and fundamental issues discussed in the article, the following are the recommendations:

- i. As a developing country of the world, Nigeria is characterized by highly entrenched poverty which cuts across the different geographical regions of the country and for that reason, poverty has to be fought with the utmost sincerity. The government, therefore, should re intensify the efforts of adequately supplying the social welfare services in the form of food, shelter, clothing, education, health care delivery and the job creation to the masses so that the social control, conformity and development could be attained in the country. However, Nigeria should also seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.), the World Bank and the others so that they should make the debt relief conditions better and also, no country should be forced or lured in to unnecessary debt conditions that would further worsened up the globalization of poverty through the debt resettlement, the interest rates, fraud, currency devaluation and severe trade liberalization;
- ii. There is the need for the Federal Government of Nigeria to organize a public enlightenment programme on the international and the regional sensitization campaigns against the business of child trafficking and its harmful effects in the society. The campaign could also be conducted through the development of the Information Education Communication which is for the benefit of the Nigerian masses;
- iii. There is the need for the re-intensification of the legal aid services. It is in view of the fact that, there are million Nigerians who are living, in the endemic poverty

- from different geographical regions of the country and because of that, they do not have the financial capacity to employ the noble services of lawyers who could defend them before any independent impartial court of law in the country. Therefore, if the Federal Government of Nigeria could intervene, the challenges of the business of child trafficking could be curtailed in the country;
- iv. With regard to the challenges of illiteracy and ignorance which are part of the causes of child trafficking in Nigeria, there is the need for re-intensification of Adult Education. Normally, education is a weapon of liberation from ignorance, poverty and diseases and it is also, a tool that could be utilized in achieving a sustainable national development most especially in a developing country like Nigeria. With the intervention of the Federal Government of Nigeria in intensifying the development of the Adult Education in the country, the challenges of illiteracy and ignorance could be substantially cleared away;
 - v. The provision of guidance and counseling is something that is fundamentally important in the country. There is, therefore, the need for the government in Nigeria to ensure that, proper and sound guidance and counseling are adequately provided to the child business traffickers and also, the children who happened to be the victims in the hands of immoral and unsympathetic traffickers (Boyi, 2011). The counseling services are available especially in the institutions of learning such as the universities, the colleges of education, the courts of law and others;
 - vi. Lastly, there is also the need for the Federal Government of Nigeria, the State and the Local Government Areas to sufficiently provide the recreational facilities for our children at home so that they could be busy and concentrate their attention on the issues that could aid them to be socially responsible thereby contributing to the development of their societies. This also entails that, more and more amusement parks and other children's play grounds should be adequately constructed and be well furnished with the modern facilities that make the human lives happier and comfortable in all the states of the federation in Nigeria.

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