

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: CAUSES AND IMPLICATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Borisade Tunde Fidelis**

*School of Education College of Education, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria*

*E-mail: tundefidelis@yahoo.com*

## ABSTRACT

*This review examined the courses and problems of human trafficking and sexual exploitation in Nigeria. Attention was on the reasons and courses behind the spate of this scourge, the victims and why it has continued unabated. Its immediate and long run effects on the national development were also examined. Findings revealed that poverty is no doubt the greatest course of people falling victim of either human traffickers or sexual exploiters. Even during the so-called abolished slave trade, majority of the victim are people from poor parents. Their parents sold them knowingly or unknowingly to the slave traders because they cannot make both ends meet. Also, the high level of illiteracy, unemployment and or poor standard of living was not an exemption of the causes. It was recommended among others that the creation of awareness of the negative effects of human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and the provision of jobs to improve the living condition of all Nigerians will help fight the scourge.*

**Keywords:** *Human trafficking, sexual exploitation, implication, national development*

## INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is of course older than the geographical area called Nigeria today. It is indeed the abhorrent phenomenon called slave trade, which was abolished in the year 1865, thus the insurgence called human trafficking actually is in reality modern day slavery. Though the means, form and method of operation may differ slightly, the intent and operational framework is more or less the same. While slave trading could be viewed as a process of exchange of good for human being, human trafficking on the other hand can be viewed as an act of transporting or harboring of people for the purpose of either slavery or forced labour or servitude. The international Webster comprehensive dictionary of contemporary English (2004) defined trafficking as an act of buying and trading or to have dealing with. Thus human trafficking connotes buying and or trading in human being. In other words, like any other commodities that are transportable or moveable, human being are negotiated about, priced and then transported away from their places of abode or localities and taken to a far distance where their original identities are completely unknown

According to Charter of member states of the Economic Community of Central Africa States and Economic Community of West Africa States (2006), on how to combat trafficking in person, article 1, subsection a, defined trafficking in person to mean; the recruitment, transportation, transfer, accommodation, or receipt

of persons by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, or abduction of fraud or deception or abuse of power or a position of vulnerability of the giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person. In the same charter, child trafficking means, the recruitment, transportation, accommodation or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation either sexual exploitation or force labour or services, slavery or servitude or removal of organs. These briefs attested to the fact that, human trafficking has indeed takes its root from the ancient but already abolished slave trading. It is therefore seen as anew coinage that replaces the latter in a more refined crude and wicked form.

Unlike slave trade victims, human trafficking victims are usually recruited using coercion, deception or outright abduction. It may also be carried out in form of threat, violence, economic leverage or debt bondage, which more often than not can make victim consent to exploitation. Victims can be lured or tricked by false promises. It may be through the use of manipulative tactics; intimidations feigned love or forced feeding with drugs to control them. The trafficking may also pick those seeking entry to other countries under the pretence that they will assist them or that they will be freed after being smuggled across the border. Also sexuality is the state of having or been distinguish by sex; a state of one's preoccupation with sex. But sexual exploitation on the other hand is an organized movement of people usually women between countries or within their countries for sex work. Like human trafficking, sexual exploitation is usually carried out with the use of physical coercion deception or bondage through forced debt.

## **THE VICTIMS**

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation victims are mostly the vulnerable and powerless minorities. That is, those from poorer area and from poor background where opportunities are limited. In some causes, criminals exploit lack of opportunities and promise them good job or opportunities to study and later forced them to become prostitutes. Children from poor families more often than not are real victims of trafficking. Parent of extreme poverty may sell their wards or children to traffickers in order to pay off debts or gain income and may be deceived concerning the prospect of training and better life for their children. David (2008); state that there are systemic vulnerabilities in the inter country adoption system that makes adoption scandals predictable. Equally noticed as victims of this scourge are children that has lost one or both parents to the African AIDS crises or national death, either through accident of poison or epidemics, the adoption process legal or illegal have often resulted in cases of trafficking of babies and pregnant women.

Equally, Lyons and Jacobrit (1999) asserted that, thousands of children from Asia, Africa and South America are sold into the Global sex trade every year. These children were sometimes kidnapped or orphaned and sometime sold by their parents. The ECOWAS - ECCAS regional conference (2006) also recognized that, poverty, lack of education and lack of equal opportunity makes person especially women and children to be vulnerable to becoming victims of trafficking. Poor people with

disabilities, the young and old people who have low literacy skills and educational levels also constitute victims of trafficking. However, it needs reiterated that, these victims are found in number of places industries, sex trade centres, domestic, servitudes, restaurants, bars, food industries, drug trade, mails order, street begging and hawking, constructions sites, factories, immigrants etc. Traffickers more often than not make use of these places to catch their victims. Aside from the aforementioned victims, children of well placed politicians, academicians, journalist, clergymen and or other prominent persons in the society can also fall pray to these traffickers. These set of people could be kidnapped, lured or cajoled.

Victims of sexuality are also got from more or less the same way as victims of human trafficking. In fact most of the victims of human trafficking later become prostitutes, hackers, hotel guests or call girls aristotoes. The perpetrators will come to the parents of the victims in disguised; some will pretend to be assisting the parent. These exploiters gave money and materials to induce parents. Sexual exploiters also catch their victims from higher institutions. It is a known fact today that, there are high level of moral decadence in our higher institution especially among the female students. They sometimes constitute themselves in groups or go individually. The Aristotoes, they have made going out with big daddies or married men especially politicians and the rich men to complement their means of livelihood. They sell their bodies to make money. "If you cannot get what you want-make use of what you have to get what you want, is their slogan" You find them in hotels, parties or social gatherings, political rallies etc. at weekends and week days. These set of female students need either persuasion from the sexual exploiters to the latter demand.

This is much more pronounced among female students from poor family background, who of course were introduced to the fold by students from rich and influential families. And before you know it, these sexual exploiters have whisked them to some foreign countries such as Germany, Italy, China, Gabon and even US so as to make money for them. These researchers on two occasions have been privileged to have saved some female students who could have fell victim to sexual exploiters. I t was reported that some of the victims taken to another country were later dehumanized, detained and later deported because she was no more useful to her captors and she also realized that the objective for which she were taken was not what she met there. It was further reported that out there, they were exposed to all sorts of vices ranging from molestation, frustration, prostitution, sleeping with animals etc. UNESCO (2004), attested to this, that this type of sexual practice actually brought about the existence of HIV/AIDS to Nigeria in 1986 when it was diagnosed in a sexually active 13 years old girl (Bulya and Amery 2009).

Suffice it to say therefore that, any careless individual be it a man or woman, boy or girl can fall victim to either human traffickers or sexual exploiters. Loose talk inside commercial vehicles, in hotels, restaurants, even churches and mosques, social gatherings, student hostels, lecture halls or rooms can make one fall victim, because the next person to you may be a trafficker or exploiter or their agents.

## CAUSES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Many factors can indeed be adduced as major causes of human trafficking and sexual exploitation not only in Nigeria today but globally. These factors include the highly abject poverty that for long have been milking the entire populace dry. Poverty is no doubt the greatest cause of people falling victim to either human trafficker or sexual exploiters. Even during the so-called abolished slave trade, majority of the victim are people from poor parents. Their parents sold them knowingly or unknowingly to the slave traders because they cannot make both ends meet.

Indeed, the prevailing condition for such an act then is still very much rampant today. Parents gave out their children freely to these traffickers in exchange for money. Another cause of this scourge is the high level of illiteracy, unemployment and or poor standard of living. Illiteracy on its own is a disease with the percentage of illiterate people in Nigeria being far greater than the literate one. Unemployment rate in Nigeria has continually been on the increase. The associated ill of unemployment include high level of moral decadency, self defeat, thuggery, armed robbery, Kidnapping, garage touts, political thuggery and or poor standard of living. Majority of Nigeria populace are currently living in abject poverty. Many cannot afford the three square meals a day. Poverty is a disease and to solve it its victim can go into any length including trafficking or sexual exploits.

In Nigeria today, there is high taste for materialistic values especially among the youths. An average youth in Nigeria today aims at nothing but to become a millionaire within a day, not minding what it will take. Human trafficking, Kidnapping, sexual exploitation, prostitution, pornography etc became their pets. Another cause of human trafficking and sexual exploitation is political instability. Politiking in Nigeria today is manifesting in all facet of life. Educational sector, economic sector, health sector, our ways of living, even family life have all been badly influenced by politics. This no doubt has brought with it all sort of social vices, such as retrenchment, punitive transfer, victimization, downgrading of officers for political reasons, official stealing, lackadaisical attitude of junior officers to superior officers as a result of political or godfather connection etc. All these are ill winds that never blow good. One of the means of seeking redress by the affected officer could be by engaging in trafficking in human being or become their agent.

Dominic A. (2009), opined that, there are criminally organized groups that are involved in human trafficking or sexual exploitation. They are professionals spread across the globe, and because of porous boarder and advanced communication technology, the business has indeed increasingly become transnational in scope and is highly lucrative. Dohridge (2007), states that, the opening up of Asia market, porous boarder, the end of Soviet Union and the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, have contributed to this globalization issue of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. In other words, the activities of these professional criminals have contributed to unabated spread of the scourge. Many a times they moved to other countries without being intercepted either by immigration officers or other law

enforcement agents. Dominic(2009) equally averred that, there are no restrictions, that a lot of women and children are catered away to other countries for sexual exploitation and other related activities. Another shocking dimension to human trafficking or sexual exploitation is that, the adult who sexually abuses a child or adolescent is usually someone the child knows and is suppose to trust. Such person may include a relation of the child, child care provider, family friend's neighbor, teachers, and coach or clergy member. In all cases however the offenders claim in defend of his or her actions; the child did not invite the sexual activity. In other words sexual abuse is never the fault of the child. Closely related to the child innocence of sexual exploitation is the prostitution of children, which according to ILO convention (1999), is seen as forming art of the commercial sexual exploitation of children globally and is sometimes connected to the trafficking of children for sexual purposes or for ritual reasons depending on the intention of the traffickers. Children have unconsciously started sharing love for money.

This was also the case in a home video film produced by patience Ozokwor (2008), titled Area Mama a.k.a. desperate woman. Wherein girls were brought from the village on the pretence of assisting them to get job in the city, only for them to be engaged in hire prostitutes or call girls, proceeds from these jobs are usually given to their masters/mistress who in turn give out just a small part of it to these girls. This no doubt is a clear indication of child sex tourism. Ruwart M. J. (2008) in his own submission averred that, children who willingly participate in sexual acts have the right to make such a decision even if it is distasteful to others. In other words, when child pornography is outlawed, prices paid for child performance rise. Thus, increasing the incentive for parents to use their children against the child's will. However, the resultant effects of child sex tourism is usually child marriage, which more often than not can lead to destitute, poverty through divorce, separation and or abandonment. The option left for those women found in this type of ugly situation, which I considered to be an extreme mental stress is to run away and later to become either prostitute in brothels or end up being trafficked. Shamiga [2009] stated that, the link between poverty, violence and trafficking have been compounded by the effect of HIV/AIDS infections, which is highly devastating to human growth and development.

### **IMPLICATION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

It was once averred in this paper that human trafficking no doubt has actually become modern day slavery. Therefore, it is now a real threat to human dignity and self -worth. Victims have been prevented from realizing their basic potentials as a result of mental illness or fear or anxiety. Ololoban (2004) opined that, victims of human trafficking are often left rejected or become dejected or completely abandoned. This of curse has a negative effect on national development because level of human resources are reduced and in some area scarce or highly insufficient. Correnery (2006), found out that children emotional and sexual abuse were strongly related to adult

depressive symptoms and that explosive verbal abuse and witnessing of domestic violence had a moderately strong association with anger hostility.

In other words, a child that was sexually abused tends to be emotionally depressed any time she thinks of the ugly incidence. Sexual exploitation in the form of prostitution may result in a lifetime of persistent illness of the victim. Such illnesses include fertility problems, effects from sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy complications, malnutrition, tuberculosis etc. Where all or any of these deadly diseases occurs, the national development is adversely affected. Their prevalence normally increases the spread of HIV/AIDS and other related diseases. The psychological effect of the scourge on parents could be grossly devastating. It will affect their productivity which will negatively affect national development.

One Yoruba adage says; a dead child is better than a lost one, attested to this. Where parents of the trafficking child are involved, the fear and uncertainty of the true position of the child, dead or alive at any given time could be too traumatic for these parents to bear, and this can cause physical or mental illness. Aside from a trafficking or sexually exploited child, they are not contributing much, if any, to the national economy. No prostitute ever contributes positively to the development of the nation, their actions are disgraceful, or termed as social misfits or deviants. The spread of their transmitted diseases could cause an epidemic which may kill thousands within a short time, thereby destroying or reducing the nation's human resources needed for her growth. Increase in violence, criminalities and high rate of school drop out may be the aftermath effect of human trafficking.

Dambo in the Nigeria Tribune of 19th August, 2008 stated that, human trafficking could bring about children's impairment, a poor or negative image of the country as in the case of massive deportation of Nigerian girls from foreign countries. It increases forced prostitution, illicit international adoption, trafficking for early marriage or recruitment as child soldiers such as, recruitment for training as militants or terrorists. It could be for beggars, for sport such as child camel jockeys or foreign religious cults. Also worth mentioning are cases where the victims became domestic servants especially girls while boys are used as scavengers, car washers, bus conductor, drug peddlers, community base brass or area boys. Majority of those engaging in these types of nefarious jobs have no true identity. They are from far places to their base; they are usually exploited and cheated by those who engaged or employed them.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Human trafficking as an illegal business is indeed becoming lucrative. It is increasingly eating deeply into our fabric. It is gradually taking a dangerous dimension which if not seriously addressed, its adverse effect will not only be on the nation as a whole but on individuals and could be more devastating than the present danger posed by the militants in the Niger Delta region. All hands must therefore be on deck to fight the endemic scourge to a standstill. Adaptation of international laws on child trafficking, cooperation or team work to support the recovery of victims, protection of victims' rights etc, should be embraced by all and sundry. Other ways of curbing

the menace are creation of awareness of the evil effects of human trafficking and sexual exploitations; the campaign could be carried out in schools, churches, mosques, market square, on radio and televisions and on newsprints; total enforcement of the law prohibiting human trafficking and sexual exploitations.

The provision of job opportunities for all Nigerian so that their living conditions can improve and the Nigeria police force and other law enforcement agents especially the immigration department should deal decisively with these traffickers and whoever is culpable irrespective of status should be prosecuted. The desire to have a nation completely free or minimally free of these scourges must be the one built on trust, justice and equity. We therefore need to address our desire to sincerely place the interest of the country above personal interests, so that most of the conditions that normally bring about one engaging in human trafficking and sexual exploitation could have been seriously addressed by the concerned authority.

## REFERENCES

- Bulya, N. O. and Ameh, G. I.** (2009). The eradication of human trafficking. A panacea for the spread of HIV/AIDS and the agenda for language experts. *Journal of women in College of Education* 13, 2, 45-60
- Correnery, C. E.** (2006). Sticks, stones and hurtful words: Relative effects of various forms of childhood maltreatment. *American journal of psychiatry*.
- David, F.** (2008). *Childhood victimization: Violence, Crime and Abuse in the live of young people*. New York: Oxford University press.
- Dominic, A. O.** (2009). Eradicating human trafficking and child labour: implication for Religious and moral education. *Journal of women in Colleges of Education* 13, 2, 10-23
- Dohridge, M.** (2007). Asean and Trafficking in Rerson; using data as a tool to combat trafficking in persons. *Human trafficking.org/combattrafficking: prevention*
- ECOWAS-ECCAS** (2006). Regional ministerial conference on the fight Against trafficking in persons. Abuja 6th -7th July 2006.
- International Labour Organization Convention** (1999).