

# **BABY DUMPING AND EVOLVING BABY FACTORIES IN NIGERIA: THEIR IMPLICATION FOR CHILD RIGHT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

**Bridget Okwuchi Alichie**

## **Abstract**

The rising incidences of baby factories have gradually added to the plethora of human rights issues bedeviling Nigeria and have thus posed a new dimension to issues of child abuse and trafficking in recent times. Few scholarly works existing on this social problem center on poverty as the main factor which launched baby factories into one of the most lucrative organized crimes in Nigeria. This paper considered various socio-cultural factors influencing the upsurge of baby dumping and evolving baby factories in Nigeria. It conclusively proposes a society-based approach which involves a thorough overhaul of our rigid social orientation which will create room for a conducive environment for child rights and social protection.

**Keywords:** Baby Dumping, Child abandonment, Child Abuse, Child Right, Baby Boxes, Baby Factories, Human Trafficking, Social Protection, Stigma, Nigeria.

## **Introductory Background**

Globally, human trafficking has formed the basis of organized crime holding various developed, developing and semi-developed economies in a grave web of organized crimes because of the enormous wealth generated from the shady enterprise. Reports put the scale of human trafficking as a global phenomenon involving millions of at least 136 different nationality from around 118 countries nationwide (Huntley, 2013; UNESCO, 2006). Various developed and developing countries of the world such as; United Kingdom, United states of America, Malaysia, Guatemala, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Rwanda, China, Sao Tome, Russia, Romania, Indonesia, Namibia, Nigeria, Benin Republic, Angola, Gabon, Ethiopia etc are faced with growing cases of human trafficking (Onuoha, 2014; Better Care Network Review, 2015; Thorne, 2012).

However, trafficking in human beings, especially women and girls, is not entirely new. Historically it has taken many forms, but in the context of globalization, it has acquired shocking new dimensions to include the worst of all forms of human trafficking issues the world over which is the rising cases of trafficking in children (UNESCO, 2006). This is as a result of the fact that unlike other cases of human trafficking where some of the victims assent to the illegal practice for the purpose of monetary gains or other forms of compensation, the victims in this scenario are traded from conception and a price paid for them in their first few days on earth. This implies that victims of child trafficking are usually under-aged children who are most vulnerable and rarely know their rights to ever clamour for social protection (Jones, Presler-Marshall, Cooke & Akirimisi (2012), 2014 New Telegraph News, 2014).

According to the U.S official federal statistics in Every Child Matters Education Fund (2010), 12,180 children died from various forms of child abuse during the 2001-2008 period. Consequently, the rise in cases of child abuse such as; child trafficking, child labour, child neglect etc which all constitute grave crime against humanity gradually took a worrisome trend globally that most of these countries partnered in the fight against this ugly trend in child abuse

by acceding to various international treaties, creating relevant domestic policies and enactment of strict penalties for offenders in the bid to give every child born the benefit of child right and social protection that by August 2012, 153 countries and territories have criminalized “fully or partially all or most forms of trafficking in persons including children” (UNESCO, 2006). Furthermore, some countries explicitly provided for application of universal jurisdiction to human trafficking in their national legislation, thus elevating this offence to the status of an international crime (Huntley, 2013).

However few decades ago, while various countries still grappled with these existing forms of child abuse, a new dimension of child abuse also emerged in the form of baby dumping in some developed and developing countries. Citing the UK Guardian, ((2007), China, Guatemala, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, and other Asian and African countries have issues of baby dumping saddling their respective governments which they are seriously contending with. Despite how difficult it may seem to totally eradicate the social malaise, measures so far applied have proved to reduce such cases to the barest minimum in some of these countries while failing to work in others. For instance, in some countries, such as the United States, the problem of “baby dumping” has been addressed by “safe haven” legislation. These laws are sometimes called by other names, such as “Baby Moses” laws or “safe surrender” laws. The first such law in the USA was passed in the state of Texas in 1999, after thirteen babies were left in public places around the state capital in a single year, with four of them being found dead. By early 2008, all 50 states in the United States had enacted some version of these kinds of law (Termizi et al, 2014; Ojedokun & Atoi, 2012).

Furthermore, countries such as Malaysia, Russia, Indonesia, India, Guatemala etc have built relief centers and invented the use of “baby boxes” otherwise referred to as baby hatches usually placed near hospitals and out of sight from police and security cameras in a bid to prevent unwanted newborns being dumped where they will either die before being discovered and put up for adoption or come to harm (Termizi et al, 2014). This is in line with the idea of Thorne (2012) which stated that, out of the 27 EU member countries that endorsed the use of baby boxes or hatches, 11 still have these baby hatches in operation till date-Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, and Slovakia. These baby boxes or hatches were placed in remote places to reduce the fear of teenage mothers who may resort to dumping their unwanted babies in harmful places out of fear of being caught. This shows that violations of child’s rights and social protection are part of ongoing human rights issues globally and various countries of the world have frantically sought workable preventive measures and solutions to this menace.

The various treaties and policies outlined below were those ratified by Nigerian government for fighting human trafficking and for the protection of women and children (UNESCO, 2006; Charles, Akwara & Andeshi, 2014; Jones, Presler-Marshall, Cooke & Akirimisi (2012). These treaties ratified can be categorized under the local level, regional level and international level treaties.

At the international level are, The United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (2000) and the Palermo Protocol (2000), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Optional Protocol to it on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and

Child Pornography (2000), the ICC Statute (2002), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and the Optional Protocol to it (1999), the International Labour Organisation Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999), and the United Nations Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956).

The regional level treaties include; The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1982), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) while the local level treaties include; The Child Rights Act in 2003, The National Agency for Prohibition of Traffic in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP), The federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development and Nigerian Federal Ministry of Employment, Labour and Productivity (Child Labour Unit)

These several bogus treaties and policies employed by the Nigeria government towards reducing cases of child abuse not only failed but also faced a more dangerous trend in child abuse cases such that besides baby dumping, there was an emergence and steady growth of **baby factories** which reportedly sprang up about a decade ago in Nigeria just like in few other countries. As child abuse assumed a worrisome dimension with alarming growth in records of baby dumping and evolving baby factories daily, women and children jointly became vulnerable victims of this societal menace. Minkang & William quoted in Charles, Akwara & Andeshi, (2014) stated that the various measures that appear very formidable and proactive thus failed to totally stamp out abuse of innocent children and Nigerian government failed to effectively enforce similar workable measures to protect the rights of every Nigerian child against abuse as were done in other developed countries of the world. This assertion is in line with the submission of Huntley (2013) that, in spite of the various international, regional and local treaties and instruments adopted by Nigerian government to safeguard against rising incidences of child abuse, it has proved ineffective because the current policies on child right and social protection by the Federal, State and Local Governments are far below the level needed to enforce such strict measures or as a result of either too weak, loose policies lacking the institutional framework that would make them viable. Consequently, the growth of this twin-evil; baby dumping and emergent baby factories which seem to have a synergistic relationship have gradually added to the plethora of human right issues bogging the Nigerian society and as such should be tackled together. Regrettably, although government should be at the fore-front of this fight against child abuse of all forms, there are several barriers to child protection at all levels of society, many of which require aggressive advocacy and sensitization of the entire Nigerian society. Unfortunately, they are often under-recognized and under-reported by citizens but instead left solely to the government (Egbue, 2001). Scholars like, Link & Phelan (2001) argued that, discrimination as well as all forms of social stigma are mainly responsible for most social problems which include the rise in incidences of baby dumping or baby factories. This is because it has been established that almost all the cases of baby dumping and sale of babies in baby factories are traced to unmarried teenagers and women who in their bid to hide their condition for fear of stigma, discrimination and rejection fell into the ready arms of baby factory operators and syndicate who promised to hide them and eventually buy their babies in order to permanently erase their shame and ensure continued social acceptance. For these enumerated reasons, social rejection and associated shame and discrimination remain significant barriers to

child survival and development. Thus, there is need for preventing and responding to violence, exploitation and social stigma placed on unmarried teenagers/women with unwanted pregnancies, stigma placed on children born outside wedlock, stigma placed on infertility among couples or couple with only girl child/children etc are the manifest factors influencing this criminal enterprise-buying and selling of babies ([www.againstbabyfactories.com](http://www.againstbabyfactories.com) accessed 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2014; Vanguard, 2014). These human right issues require a harmonized policy and programming environment that is sensitive to the age and gender specific needs of children of which government at all levels as well as every citizen must be involved.

Unfortunately, few scholarly works existing on the nature and causes of baby dumping and evolving baby factory incidences failed to point out the socio-cultural factors influencing such but centered mainly on economic problems (poverty) as the factor influencing the rise of baby factories into one of the most lucrative organized crimes in Nigeria and few countries where they exist. Thus, the rationale behind this work is to add to research in the field by considering various socio-cultural factors fuelling the upsurge of baby dumping visa-a vis evolving baby factory incidences in Nigeria in recent times. Thus, in light of the foregoing, the following objectives have been generated as the study guide;

- To examine the nature and extent of baby dumping/factories in Nigeria.
- To examine the relationship between the incidences of baby dumping and emergent of baby factories in Nigeria.
- To ascertain the various socio-cultural factors influencing the rise of baby factories in Nigeria;
- To suggest possible ways of ameliorating the problem of baby dumping and evolving baby factories in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Framework and Literature Review**

### **Overview of Baby Dumping**

The phenomenon of baby dumping also referred to as 'child abandonment' has been defined as an intentional and interminable loss of a child through rejection of position of ultimate responsibility for the care and upbringing of such child (Egbue, 2001). This entails dumping or abandoning such a child in either open or closed places like on the street, riverbanks, refuse sites, pit toilets, open-market places, roadsides, mosque or church premises, bushes, doorways, e.t.c (Ojedokun & Atoi, 2012). Also, child abandonment is defined in two ways, namely open and secret abandonment. Open abandonment is defined as a child being knowingly left behind by his parent, who can be identified and whose intention is not to return but relinquish parental responsibility. Secret abandonment is defined as a child being secretly left behind his parent, who cannot be identified and whose intention is not to return but relinquish parental responsibility anonymously (Better Care Network Reports, 2012), Ojedokun & Atoi, 2012) also defined baby dumping as a criminal act which involves discarding or throwing away of babies by their parents. Similarly, Sazali (2001) stated that it can also be referred to as discarding or leaving a baby alone for an extended period of time especially a child younger than 12 months of age in public or private place with the intent to dispose the baby.

The practice of baby dumping or child abandonment is not entirely new and is mostly found in both industrialized and non-industrialized societies. For instance over the past few decades cases of baby dumping and child trafficking were largely reported in countries such as United

Kingdom, U.S.A, Malaysia, China, Bulgaria, Russia and Spain, Thailand, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia etc ((Termizi et al, 2014; Onuoha, 2014; FoxNews, 2014). In China for example, report shows that the child welfare hospitals in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region as well as other regions take in more than 2,000 abandoned babies each year most babies abandoned were girl-infants, which has led to a severe gender imbalance in the autonomous region studied. Hence, the result is black-market baby buying and selling running rampant in many places in China. It was stated that the main reason for the abandonment phenomenon in China is a perversion at the grass roots of the initial national family planning policy of one child per couple which was signed into effect in 1979 as amended as at September 1, 2002 whereby although the policy states that if the first child born to a rural couple is a girl, they may have a second child, some local officials have turned this policy into an excuse for covert "penalty" collection: the more money you can pay, the more children you can have (Xinhua News, 2005). According to statistics released by Polis Diraja Malaysia (PDRM), baby dumping issues involving infant aged 12 or less were on the increase between 2001-2010, Selangor Malaysia which was the highest state on baby dumping occurrences was a total of 182 cases. In addition, According to government statistics, between 2005 and January 2011, 517 Malaysian babies were "dumped" -- a term that encompasses acts as disparate as tossing infants from windows and simply abandoning them in field (Bloomberg News, 2014). Indian authorities discovered among debris in 2007, shards of tiny skulls and bones, all that remains of more than 40 female fetuses - aborted because of their sex and then dumped in a disused well (The Guardian, 2007). Similarly Spanish and Bulgarian authorities also discovered few cases of abandoned children on the streets just as developing countries such as Nigeria, Namibia, Angola etc are not left out. Sadly, the case of Africa especially Nigeria seem most unfortunate because this appears to be the place where this practice seen most prevalent because the few scholarly articles on this social problem within the country maintained that the case of baby dumping is one of the most serious issues in Nigeria. (Adesiyun Et al, 2010; Adewale, 1988; Akani & Erhabor, 2006 & Ojedokun and Atoi, 2012).

Although, there are no available detailed national statistics on the recorded cases of dumped or abandoned babies in Nigeria, occasional State reports from different parts of the country indicate the alarming rate at which this criminal act is being perpetrated. For instance, the register of the Child Care unit of the Oyo State Ministry of Women Affairs, Community Development and Social Welfare in Ibadan indicates that a total of 114 cases of dumped and/or abandoned babies were recorded between January 2009 and February 2012, compared to 84 cases that were recorded between January 2006 and December 2008. Similarly, in a related development, the Special Adviser to the Lagos State Government on Youth and Social Development recently revealed that Lagos State in 2011 recorded 497 cases of abandoned babies dumped in different streets of the state (New Telegraph News, 2014; Okoje in Ojedokun & Atoi, (2012). The Kebbi State Committee on *Hisba* (Social Welfare) recently claimed that it recorded over 50 cases of abandoned babies in various locations across the State, between October and December 2011 (Kabara & Gulma, 2012).

Also, studies conducted by Akani and Erhabor between 1999 and 2003 quoted in Ojedokun and Atoi (2012) revealed 140 cases of abandoned babies in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The statistics on baby dumping in Namibia are equally scary. The Gammams Water Care Works in Windhoek estimated in April 2008 that they discover an average 13 bodies of newborn babies each month

among human waste. In addition it was reported that the concealment of birth cases reported rose by about 283% from 2003 to 2007 ranging from 6 to 23 reported cases weekly and about 40 babies and foetuses are dumped or flushed down toilets every month in Windhoek, Namibia's capital (Namibia Sun, 2011).

Tables below also present data on various forms of child abuse reported by the police in Nigeria, Namibia and Malaysia. These represent established cases which were either reported or discovered by the police in these various countries.

**Table 1: Offences against Children and Young Persons in Nigeria**

State	Defilement	Child Stealing	Other Offences	Abandoned	Child Abuse	Found Child	Kidnap-Ping	Abdication
Abuja	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abia	3	1	4	4	9	-	-	-
Akwa-Ibom	3	-	-	5	9	1	3	-
Anambra	6	-	2	2	9	-	11	7
Adamawa	4	1	1	1	7	-	10	2
Bauchi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Benue	3	-	-	2	3	-	5	5
Borno	1	-	1	2	2	-	6	-
Cross River	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	1
Delta	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-
Edo	2	-	4	3	4	2	-	-
Enugu	8	-	-	-	5	-	3	-
Imo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jigawa	-	-	-	3	1	2	-	5
Kaduna	4	5	-	-	1	-	-	-
Kano	2	-	17	6	2	-	10	1
Kastina	1	-	-	2	2	-	-	-
Kogi	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Kwara	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-
Lagos	13	-	-	9	9	-	-	-
Niger	2	-	3	2	1	-	16	1
Ogun	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	8
Ondo	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
Oyo	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
Plateau	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rivers	1	-	10	-	1	-	5	-
Sokoto	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-
Taraba	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Yobe	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-
Total	58	7	56	41	65	5	60	33

Source: Nigerian Police Force Report 1998: Annual Abstract of Statistics. Cited in Egbue 2001.

**Table 2: Reported cases of concealment of birth between 2003-2007 in Namibia**

Year	Number of Cases
2003	6
2004	13
2005	17
2006	15
2007	23

Source: Namibian Police, April 2008. Cited in Hubbard (2008).

**Table 3: Reported cases of murder of Juveniles, 2003-2007 in Namibia**

Year	Number of Cases
2003	murder with firearm: 4 murder with another weapon: 19 murder by poison/noxious substance: 0 murder by other means: 16
2004	murder with firearm: 0 murder with another weapon: 10 murder by poison/noxious substance: 2 murder by other means: 19
2005	murder with firearm: 3 murder with another weapon: 21 murder by poison/noxious substance: 0 murder by other means: 16
2006	murder with firearm: 3 murder with another weapon: 10 murder by poison/noxious substance: 2 murder by other means: 13
2007	murder with firearm: 4 murder with another weapon: 10 murder by poison/noxious substance: 0 murder by other means: 23

Source: Namibian Police, April 2008. Cited in Hubbard (2008)

**Table 4: Baby dumping cases in Malaysia**

YEAR	NUMBER OF REPORTED CASES
2008	102
2009	79
2010	91
2011	98
2012	88
2013	90
2014	13

Source: Mansoor (2014); Police Diraja Malaysia-PDRM (2014). Cited in Termizi et al (2014).

**Table 5: Number of cases related to baby dumping in Malaysia**

YEAR	OPEN	CHARGED	CONVICTED
2010	91	17	7
2011	98	31	6
2012	88	7	2
2013	90	3	3

2014	18	0	0
------	----	---	---

Source: PDRM (2014). Note: \*until May 2014. Cited in Termizi et al (2014)

The implication of these tables above is not that cases of child abuse is low in Nigeria and other countries outlined, but it merely proves the assertion that while the statistics on baby dumping and other forms of child abuse is available from as early as 1898 in the UK in other developed countries of the world, the statistics on baby dumping and other forms of child abuse is not widely available in most developing countries. Since most authorities in these countries are not charged or well equipped to efficiently keep these statistics thereby leading to lack of detailed reports on these dumped newborns and causing the official statistics to always be assumed as under-reported and understated (Termizi et al, 2014).

### **Causes of Baby Dumping/Child Abandonment**

Although scholars such as Huntley (2014), Onuoha (2014), Charles, Akwara & Andeshi, (2014), Ojedokun & Atoi (2012) etc, strongly argued that poverty is the major factor influencing the incidences of baby dumping in Nigeria. This is in sharp contrast with the study conducted by Saad (2013) on causes on baby dumping among teenagers in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia as he outlined seven factors in ranking order influencing baby dumping:

- Lack of religious up bringing
- Poor application of religious knowledge
- Lack of parental care and supervision
- Family break-up
- Peer influence
- Media influence
- Economic problem(poverty)

Saad (2013), ranked economic problem (poverty) as the least factor considered by respondent as cause of baby dumping in Kuala Lumpur, this is because he observed how difficult it was among mothers who were married or in legal relationships to dump their babies after birth not minding their economic problems. By implication, cases of babies dumping were found mostly among teenagers who were unmarried. This corroborated the studies conducted by Termizi et al (2014) in Malaysia which found that lack of religious understanding, influence of mass media, marriage's difficulty, no parental control and the collapse of family institution as possible contributing factors leading towards baby dumping. This is in line with a report from India on the causes of baby dumping, which stated that such problems arise when a woman has an unplanned pregnancy and become pressured by the question about the status of the child. It added that, they may also be pressured by "tradition" whereby these young women face rejection by their parents and the community if they are found to have a baby outside marriage. As such, this is the dominant cause of baby dumping (<http://konisyahasogan.blogspot.com>. Ojedokun & Atoi (2012) citing Mohamed, Ali, S. Baig, and F. Baig also attributed the causes of rampant incidents of baby dumping in Malaysia to unwanted pregnancies, rapid urbanization, poor parenting control, and peer influence and stigma. Hence, these social stigmas and fear of being rejected by a society which discriminates against victims of unwanted pregnancies and the babies born in such situation as well as children born with disabilities are the primary causes of baby dumping (Ojedokun & Atoi, 2012). By implication, it has been established that poverty is only a secondary factor which can influence baby dumping among teenagers who end up with

unwanted pregnancies as there are hardly cases of baby dumping among married teenagers or women irrespective of how poor their economic condition may be.

Within Nigeria however, the causes of baby dumping has seriously been attributed to poverty and economic hardship as the few studies available show shortage of literature in establishing a relationship between baby dumping and cultural impediments of a multi-cultural society with dominant value system like Nigeria. Huntley (2013) outlined the causes of baby factories to include; poverty and high unemployment rates particularly in rural areas, low levels of education and literacy, corruption, and lack of information on human trafficking and corruption of law enforcement agencies. Ojedokun & Atoi (2012) noted the causes of baby dumping as poverty, gender inequality, modernization, prostitution, infidelity and physical disability. In the same vein, the study conducted by Onuoha (2014) listed the causes of baby factory incidences to include; escalating poverty, decaying moral and social values in contemporary society, poor regulation of orphanage homes and the complicity of state actors.

However while most researches on this social problem concentrated more on economic factors, few works pointed out some cultural factors that give rise to baby factories. For instance, Onuoha (2014) made a strong point for cultural factors that promote the rise of baby factory such as; premium placed on having biological child – Infertility and the cultural practice of ostracizing pregnancies out of wedlock. Huntley (2013) also mentioned gender discrimination and social stigmas in Nigerian society as some causal factors.

### **Overview of Baby Factories**

The term **baby factory** has been used interchangeably with “baby farms” or “baby harvesting”. Children that usually fall within the category found in these factories or farms are usually children from birth to the age of 12 months. According to Onuoha (2014), baby factories refers to all acts involved in the transfer, sale or receipt of baby/babies within national or across international borders through stealing or false adoption, fraud or deception to be used for satisfying social, material and ritual purposes among others. Huntley (2013) also opined that the term baby factory has no legal definition yet but instead used by journalist to describe criminal activities involving the restriction of a person’s movement against his/her will, forced impregnations, sale of babies and illegal adoption.

Although due to the shady and sensitive nature of the crime, there is no records of the exact period when baby factories started or the country it originated from, baby factories is relatively a new phenomenon unlike other forms of child abuse such as; child labour, baby dumping etc. In March 2014, for instance, Chinese authorities successfully cracked four baby selling networks, rescuing 382 babies and arresting more than a thousand suspects just like similar cases were found in countries like Namibia, Gabon, Benin Republic, Guatemala etc (Onuoha, 2014). However, the incidence of baby factories in Nigeria was first reported in 2006, by the UNESCO report, yet it failed to examine the evidence of exploitation, the rate of this trend or how exactly the babies were used upon their sale to a third party (Huntley, 2013). Although New Telegraph (2014), noted that pregnant girls/women knowingly seek succour in baby factories to cover the perceived shame of unwanted pregnancy.

Furthermore, scholars like Kanu (2014) & Smolin (2007), added that children are being produced in baby factories mostly for crime laden; international country adoption systems for consumers in Europe and America from Africa countries such as Namibia, Nigeria, Ghana, Benin republic, Gabon and Ethiopia. Although the incidence earlier reported by UNESCO went on unabated in Nigeria that by 2011, there were already many established cases of this social problem (babies factories) bothering on child right and protection. Presently, the phenomenon of baby factory business and trafficking cuts across the various zones in Nigeria though it is more prevalent in the Southern states, appearing rampant in Abia, Akwa Ibom, Anambra, Cross Rivers, Imo, and Rivers States. It has also been reported in Benue, Lagos, Ogun and Ondo states. Onuoha (2014; PM News, (2013) and Punch (2013)) reported some baby factories discovered in various parts of Nigeria as outlined in the table below:

- In 2011, the police raided two hospitals, and dismantled two baby factories in Enugu State.
- In June 2011, 32 pregnant girls were rescued in Aba, Abia from a hospital of the Cross Foundation.
- Between January and March 2010, 77 girls were rescued in other parts of Abia State.
- In 2007, 19 girls were rescued from a cartel that operated between Aba and Port Harcourt in Rivers State

Although, the baby phenomenon of baby factory in Nigeria is relatively new its recognition as the worst form of crime against humanity makes it needful for the perpetrators of this crime against vulnerable infants shortly after their birth into this world to be fished out as a state of emergency and be severely punished to serve as deterrent to other aspirants of this booming but brutal business.

### **Causes of Babies Factories or Farms**

The UNESCO policy paper (2006) identified poverty, perversion of cultural traditions, manipulation of religious rituals, harmful cultural and social realities as some of the root causes of the crime while Huntley listed low levels of education, illiteracy and lack of information on human trafficking as some factors. Although few scholars who researched in this new face of child abuse and trafficking have attributed the existence of baby factories to economic conditions or ravaging poverty in Nigeria. However, unlike other forms of child abuse, which have been proven as having poverty as its single best predictor, cases of baby dumping or baby factories have been observed to have its root in its socio-cultural context of the societies concerned.

Huntley (2013) added that although poverty is a major cause of baby factories yet there are at least two other factors that make these victims of baby factories vulnerable: being children (most victims are still teenagers) or being pregnant out of wedlock, which carries a social stigma in Nigeria. UNESCO policy paper (2006) also made a case for harmful cultural and social realities as some of the root causes of the crime. An interview conducted by Vanguard Crime Guard (2013) with a high-ranking police officer in Nigeria, also argued that poverty as against what most people believe, is not an overriding reason why people indulge in baby factory or child trafficking. According to the article, there is no amount of poverty that can make a mother sell her child. Instead infertility on the side of the buyers or social stigma on the side of the seller is the overriding factor responsible for such criminal enterprise. This is in line with another interview with a founder of one of the popular orphanages in Nigeria which threw new light into what may be the reason for the high incidence of baby factories where she reportedly said that

the desire of Nigerians to adopt babies appear to be a factor in the increasing rate of crime (New Telegraph, 2014).

The awareness for adoption has been growing and as a result, a lot of couple who desire children are now going the way of adoption. But because the process of adoption in many states across the country is very tedious and sometimes, very long, and equally carries social stigma they become impatient and as a result, they would rather go through with other behind the door to obtain a child at Baby factories ([www.againstbabyfactories.com](http://www.againstbabyfactories.com)). Moreover, girls and women with unwanted pregnancies deliberately resort to baby factory owners in a bid to avoid shame and stigma which their conditions bear in the Nigerian culture before they are eventually locked up at facilities used as “baby factories”, allowing their traffickers to establish control over them and hold them until they give birth to babies that are subsequently sold to third parties for various purposes ranging from illegal international and domestic adoptions, rituals, slave labour or sexual exploitation (Huntley, 2013). This implies that more than economic factors (poverty), the social stigma which their condition carries is a more propelling factor influencing their resort to baby factories which supposedly hides them from other members of the public till after delivery and sale of their unwanted babies.

### **Linkages between Baby Dumping and Baby Factories**

A cursory look at the several factors outlined by various scholars as influencing baby dumping and baby factories in Nigeria shows a synergistic relationship between these twin-evil against humanity. It has been established that the various forms of stigma and other socio-cultural undertones breeding discrimination which ultimately makes teenagers lose their self-esteem and social acceptance has done more harm than good in abating the rising incidences of child abuse by creating even newer faces to the case of child abuse (Rathakrishnan, 2013).

Also, Huntley (2013) maintained that these Social stigmas contribute to the existence of baby dumping and even the emergence of “baby factories” in Nigeria, these stigmas are those against teenage pregnancies, pregnancies out of wedlock, couples’ infertility and legal adoptions. While the first two help ensure that there is an abundant supply of women, teenage girls, and their unwanted new-borns at such “baby factories”, the last two help to promote demand for such babies, since “adoptive” parents pass off these babies for their biological infants to avoid cultural and societal disapproval. This accounts for why recent reports show that for presently the rates of baby dumping or abandonment of unwanted babies has reduced drastically posing a major challenge to the scarcity of babies in orphanages for legal adoption (New Telegraph, 2014). By implication, baby dumping reduced while the business of baby factories replaced it and boomed to a point where the International Crime Database report describes the new baby factory phenomenon as a widespread crime which is systematic in nature, since some of the operators are allegedly to be part of human trafficking networks. (UNESCO, 2006).

### **Theoretical Frameworks: Stigma and Labelling Theories**

#### **Overview of stigma and labeling theory:**

Theory	Major premise	Policy application proposed
Labeling theory	Crime is caused by societal reactions to behavior	Diversion programmes and decriminalization of offences

Goffman (1963) traced the historic use of the word “stigma” to the Greeks who referred to it as, “bodily signs designed to expose something unusual and bad about the moral status of the signifier”. By implication, society teaches its members to categorize persons by common defining attributes and characteristics. Thus, he defines the term “stigma” as something that disqualifies an individual from full social acceptance. Similarly, the Meriam Webster Dictionary On-Line (2007) explains stigma as a mark of guilt or disgrace. However, daily routines establish the usual and the expected i.e this signs are burned into a person’s body as an indication of being a criminal, traitor or slave with attached notice of moral and judgemental nature re-inforcing these stigmas. Ultimately, the disgrace and shame of these stigmas become important than the bodily evidence of them.

This is in line with Link & Phelan (2001) who posited that labeling, stereotyping separation, status loss and discrimination can all occur at the same type and are considered components of the stigma. Which means that, the status loss and discrimination occasioned by unwanted pregnancy among teenagers in the Nigerian society largely contributes to the desire to hide their conditions permanently to avoid becoming discredited or discreditable because they possess traits perceived as being undesirable, or which exist in contradistinction to an existing “norm” (deviance). This counts as the reasons for the boom in baby factory business and why teenagers who find themselves in this condition which is perceived as unacceptable to the Nigerian socio-cultural milieu resort to extreme measures which will enable them to perpetually hide the ugly incidence from the society while retaining their “supposed” status before the society and this ultimately creates grave social consequences on human right issues for Nigerian society. This assertion is supported by Link et al (1989) in their proposal to modify labeling theory which stated that labeling, which is derived from negative social beliefs about behavior, could lead to devaluation and discrimination which could ultimately lead to negative social consequences.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

No decent society should allow human life to be so debased as to allow for the existence of baby factories. The babies who are mass produced and traded away in this criminal rackets did not commit any crime. Unlike other forms of human trafficking where victims often agree to such alliance due to financial gains, these innocent babies are too tender to not consent in any way whatsoever to be produced for sale within their first few days on earth. They are infact the most vulnerable in the society as they are yet unable to take decisions on their own. Thus, society owes a duty to protect these innocent children. Sadly in Nigeria, it is the government agencies, particularly the Ministry of Social Welfare and Community Development in collaboration with few recognized homes for motherless babies that have over time been at the forefront of providing care and protection for dumped babies lucky enough to be discovered alive or for frustrated teenagers with unwanted pregnancies. However, their effort is basically reactive in nature; this is because their approach is not sufficient to cater for this grave social problem and as such does not in any way prevent the incidence of baby dumping and the resultant emergence of baby factories. This is because the current policies on child right and social protection by the federal, state and local governments are far below the level needed to protect all these vulnerable children from imminent risk of harm, as the nation’s present commitment of resources, laws, and policies are too insufficient. Therefore, for the cases of baby dumping and the emergent baby factory phenomenon to be completely stamped out, government should be at the fore-front of this fight through a national approach to child’s right and social protection.

In light of the foregoing the following Recommendations are made:

- i. Nigerian Government should replace our weak policies on child abuse by creating a strict and clear-cut rules and punishment for defaulters like it is in developed countries. The crime of baby dumping should be clearly categorized under levels ranging from murder or attempted murder, culpable homicide, exposing a child, abandonment of infant to concealment of birth and thus punished accordingly. This will serve as a deterrent to others aspiring to engage in buying and selling (peddling) of newborn babies and other forms of child abuse.
- ii. Government's main job should not be to provide the necessary laws (like the child rights act) but implementing them to the letter. This can only be done by first providing an institutional framework that would make these child protection Acts in Nigeria viable. By implication, the government should provide safety nets for these children to grow with love, respect and security through investing in behavioural change & communication activities to targeted audiences and the general public.
- iii. The government is the biggest player in curbing child abandonment/baby factory issues. The will to implement should also lies with the government. Thus, Government should create clear-cut rules about punishments for arrested baby factory syndicates and defaulters. Also, government should provide a more conducive environment and necessary assistance to the agencies and the international community that are concerned with child's social protection such as the ministry of social welfare and community development, ministry of women affairs and social development, civil society organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) etc.
- iv. There is need for nationwide orientation and sensitization through health and social services aimed at strengthening bonds within families and in the wider society to enhance the atmosphere of love and belongingness among family members. This will go a long way to foster teenage pregnancy prevention as well as giving requisite pre-natal care that will hinder maltreatment should it happen by chance to further reduce the unsavourably practice of producing babies to sell to the highest bidders as victims will be re-assured of the affection of their family and loved ones in such times of desperate need.
- v. Just like in developed countries there is need for Nigerian government to officially create child protective services (social workers) and train law enforcement agents who must collaborate with this body to get desired results. Child protective workers and law enforcement personnel if well trained and equipped are best able to focus on the needs of the child protection and also stop future cases of such abuse.
- vi. There is a need for incorporation of awareness programs on sex education at learning institutions. This will help in increasing the awareness towards unwanted pregnancy and associated stigma. Skills and sexuality education should be incorporated into public primary and post-primary schools curricula, not restricted at high school or tertiary level. The program should give the expose of; the risk on having unprotected sex, options available if unwanted pregnancy occurs and a re-orientation to eliminate premium placed on having biological child (Infertility), cultural practice of ostracizing pregnancies out of wedlock and stigma placed on children born of such pregnancies.

## References

- Adewale, K. (2014). *Ending the baby factory menace*. In Vanguard News. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/04/ending-baby-factory-menace/#sthash.xoI0keSJ.dpuf>.
- Asogan, K. (2013). *Baby dumping in India: Introduction*. <http://konisyahasogan.blogspot.com>.
- Better Care Network Review (2012). *Facilitating Global Exchange around Children without Adequate Family Care*.
- Child Care Policy Country Reports (2 February Edition): Nottingham. <http://www.bettercarenetwork.org/BCN/topic.asp?themeID=1001&topicID>.
- Charles, A. Akwara A.F. & Andeshi, C.A. (2014). Dialectics of the Incubation of ‘Baby Factories’ in Nigeria. *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* (IJPCS), 2(1):82-90.
- Talia Carner (2010). *Dead Newborn Infant Lies In Gutter Like Trash*. In China. Marie Claire Magazine, June Edition. <http://www.taliacarner.com/deadnewborningutter.html>.
- Egbue, N.G. (2001). Child Abandonment in Nigeria: Incidences and Social Responsibilities. *The International Journal of Social enquiry*. 1(1):81-86.
- Every Child Matters Education Fund (2010). *We Can Do Better—Child Abuse Deaths in America*. Every Child Matters Education Fund Reports, Second Edition. Washington, D.C. [http://www.everychildmatters.org/storage/documents/pdf/reports/can\\_report\\_august\\_2012\\_final.pdf](http://www.everychildmatters.org/storage/documents/pdf/reports/can_report_august_2012_final.pdf).
- FoxNews, (2014). *Interpol seeks clues from 5 countries to help solve mystery over Thailand 'baby factory' case*. <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2014/08/22/interpol-seeks-clues-from-5-countries-to-help-solve-mystery-over-thailand-baby/>.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ Prentice-Hall.
- Hubbard, D. (2008). Baby dumping and infanticide. *Monograph No.1, Gender Research and Advocacy Project: Legal Assistance Center*. Windhoek, Namibia: Legal Assistance Centre.
- Huntley, S. (2013). Phenomenon of “baby factories” in Nigeria as a new trend in human trafficking. *International Crime Database-ICD Brief 3*.
- Jones, N., Presler-Marshall, E., Cooke, N. & Akirimisi, B. (2012). *Promoting synergies between child protection and social protection in Nigeria*. London: Overseas Development Institute Research. [www.odi.org.uk](http://www.odi.org.uk).
- Kanu, A. (2014). *Baby factories: New face of human trafficking*. In New Telegraph-Sanctity of Truth. <http://newtelegraphonline.com/baby-factories-new-face-of-human-trafficking/>.
- Link, B.G., Cullen, F.T., Struening, E., ShROUT, P.E. & Dohrenwend B. P. (1989). A Modified Labeling Theory Approach to Mental Disorders: An Empirical assessment. *American Sociological Review*, 54(3): 400-423.
- Link, B.G., & Phelan, J.C. (2001). Conceptualizing Stigma. *Annual review of Sociology*, 27(1): 366-385.
- Merriam-Webster Dictionary Online (2007). <http://www.merriam-webster.com>.
- Minter, A. (2012). *Malaysia's 'Baby-Dumping' Epidemic*. In Bloomberg News. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-09-28/malaysia-s-baby-dumping-epidemic>.
- Sims, B.M. (2011). *Baby dumping a social crisis in Namibia*. In Namibia Sun. <http://www.namibiansun.com/content/editors-corner/baby-dumping-social-crisis-in-namibia>.

- Ojedokun, U. A. & Atoi, E. N. (2012). The baby dumping phenomenon In Nigeria: A study on the perception of market women in Ibadan. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*. 4(1): 409–425.
- Omonobi, K. (2013). *How teenagers, desperate couples fuel baby factories–Police*. In Vanguard Crime Guard:Abuja. <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2013/12/teenagers-desperate-couples-fuel-baby-factories-police/#sthash.GB1tnCqY.dpuf>.
- Onuoha, F.C. (2014). New Wares of Trade: Understanding Evolving Baby Factory and Trafficking in Nigeria. *A paper presented at the 5th International Conference of the Institute of Security Studies*. Johannesburg, South Africa. *National and International Perspectives on Crime Reduction and Criminal Justice*, 14 - 15 August 2014.
- PM News, (2013). *19 pregnant girls freed in latest baby factory bust*. <http://pmnewsnigeria.com/2013/12/20/19-pregnant-girls-freed-in-latest-baby-factory-bust>.
- Punch, (2013) *Baby factory: Enugu police nab hair dresser, lover*. <http://www.punchng.com/metro/baby-factory-enugu-police-nab-hair-dresser-lover>.
- Ramesh, R. (2007). *Foetuses aborted and dumped secretly as India shuns baby girls*. In World News. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/jul/28/india.randeepramesh>.
- Rathakrishnan, B. (2013) .Relationship of Teacher Interaction and Self-Esteem with Perception on Baby Dumping Behavior Among Multi-Ethnic Secondary School Students In Sabah. *International Journal Of Scientific Research-IJSR*. 2(11):145.
- Saad, M.L., (2013). *Seven main causes of baby dumping among teenagers in Kuala Lumpur*. <http://www.blogieta.com/2013/06/seven-main-causes-of-baby-dumping-among.html>.
- Smolin, M.D. (2007), *Inter-country adoption and Poverty: A Human Rights Analysis*. [http://works.bepress.com/david\\_smolin/5](http://works.bepress.com/david_smolin/5).
- Termizi, M., Abdullah, N., Mohd-Jaafar, N.I., Tagaranao, M.S., & Mohd-Safian, Y.H. (2014). Comparative study on Punishment and Preventive methods of Baby Dumping: Malaysian Perspectives. *International Journal of Technical Research and Applications*. 2(4):24-28.
- The Telegraph News (2011). *Nigerian baby fsactory raided, 32 pregnant girls freed*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/8550792/Nigerianbaby-factory-raided-and-32-teenage-girls-freed.html>
- Thorne, E., (2012). *In EU, oversight needed for abandoned kids*. University of Nottingham News. <http://communications.nottingham.ac.uk/News.html>.
- UK Guardian (2007). *The Guardian, 700 British Pounds for a Child? Guatemalan baby factory deals in misery and hope*. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/mar/14/jotuckman.international>.
- UNESCO Report, (2006). *Human Trafficking in Nigeria: Root Causes and Recommendations. Poverty Policy Paper Series*. 14.2 (E):SHS/CCT/2006/PI/H/2. Paris.