

## Human Trafficking and Child Abuse: Their Effect on Our Nation's Image B.A. Amujiri

### *Abstract*

*A child is considered important and cherished in every part of the world; Arrival of a child is celebrated with Pomp and pageantry in families especially among the new married couples. A childless marriage was a source of grievous disappointment and frustration between the husband and his wife and major cause of family disorder. A childless woman is regarded as a liability in most communities. Despite the importance attached to child bearing and upbringing and in spite of the fact that there cannot be a happy home without a child, many children have become victim of abuse and neglect. The way human trafficking and child abuse have been on the increase in Nigeria is highly disturbing despite the existence of so many churches and religious groups in our country. The paper examined what human trafficking and child abuse are all about the causes and consequences of these ugly activities. The paper discovered that human trafficking and child abuse are combined to taint Nigerian's image and they are perhaps the center of modern day slavery. There is an urgent need to put an end to these ungodly and inhuman activities*

### **Introduction**

It is an incontrovertible fact that a child is considered important and cherished in every part of the world. In many societies from ancient to the present modern era, the birth of a child is celebrated with pomp and pageantry. In families, especially among the newly married couples, the arrival of a child always marks a turning point in the history and life of the family.

As Nwabachili (2006) correctly noted, in traditional African Societies, procreation was one of the major if not the most important functions of the family. A man married many wives to ensure the procreation of children to his full limit. Children were considered by the society as the most important symbol of status. They were in the words of Basden (1921) "Priceless possessions, and no man could have too many". The more children a man had, the higher his social standing, the more he was respected and envied by the community. In those early days, Nwabachaili (2006:2) posited, that a

childless marriage is a source of grievous disappointment and frustration between the husband and his wife, and major cause of family disorders.

A childless woman Akukwe (2000) noted is regarded as a liability with despise, and in some communities, when such a woman dies, her abdomen will be slit across before burial in order to express the contempt with which she was held or as a reprisal for her failing to fulfill her functions in life. In a society like TIV communities, when a married woman dies without a child, the husband will go to her parents to recover the dowry he paid on that woman's head from her parents before burial.

Even in contemporary times, Wilikie (1988) observed, a marriage without children have always led to a serious problem in the family and sometimes to divorce or separation between the husband and wife or at best to the "disappointed" and "aggrieved" husband taking additional wife or wives, sometimes with the consent or active participation of the "disappointing" wife. There is proliferation of churches in our society today partly because of problem of childlessness.

Despite the importance attached to child bearing and upbringing and in spite of the fact that there cannot be a happy home without a child, many children have become victim of abuse and neglect. The way human trafficking and child abuse have been on the increase in developing countries especially Nigeria is highly disturbing despite the existence of so many churches and religious groups in our society have become a matter of serious concern. In fact, human trafficking, child abuse and neglect have assumed a disturbing dimension and alarming proportion to attract the attention of any meaningful and reasonable member of our society.

The paper tends to raise the following questions:

1. What is human trafficking and child abuse all about?
2. What are the causes of human trafficking and child abuse in our society today?
3. What are the consequences of human trafficking and child abuse in our society?
4. What should be done to reduce it to a vanishing point?

### **Conceptual Clarifications**

#### **1. Human Trafficking**

Human trafficking is here described as illegal trading on human beings. It is a process of commercialization of human beings for the sole purpose of making profit by exploiting the person concerned.

#### **2. Child Abuse**

UNICEF defined child abuse and neglect as “proportional harm (which can be physical, verbal or emotional) that results from human action or inaction that is proscribed and preventable or a manifestation of inadequate child care by parents and caretakers towards children of less than 18 years of age. According to the African Networks for the prevention and protection against child abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN) of any deliberate act by person, group or society designed to inflict harm on a child or prevent it from normal, physical, emotional and moral development is child abuse.

Abonyi (2009) posits that child abuse and neglect have many forms and vary in degree. They include:

- (1) Tampering with the rights of the child
- (2) Child prostitution and child pornography
- (3) Child Labour and child slavery

- (4) Child circumcision and genital, cutting
- (5) All forms of physical abuse of the child
- (6) Several forms of mental torture of the child
- (7) The use of the child in war and combat.
- (8) Early and child marriage.
- (9) Abortion and child abandonment.
- (10) Battering, physical abuse, violent acts, kicking and slapping.
- (11) Forced Labour, economic exploitation and street hawking.
- (12) Rejection, denial and deprivation.
- (13) Malnourishment of the child
- (14) Children used as beggars in the street
- (15) Mental cruelty
- (16) Withdrawal of love etc.

## **2.0 Causes of Human Trafficking and Child Abuse**

Boulding (1965) asserted that a child is said to be the most valuable natural resources and the hope of the future. Hence, children deserve to be wanted, loved, cared for, and protected. Unfortunately, however, the reverse is the case. Layoe (1985) for instance, argued that in our societies, children have been exposed to traumatic experience in the hands of parents, relatives and strangers alike. Adults have exploited the powerlessness of children and their consequently low status in society. In other words, parents and caretakers have physically and emotionally abused children. The causes of this ungodly, inhuman and unpatriotic treatment are as follows:

### **1. Level of stress experienced in family**

According to Anugwom (2000), the probability of child abuse occurring in a family increases with the level of stress experienced in the family. In other words, lower income structure

in a family with fewer economic resources leads to numerous kinds of insecurity. As Eke (2007) discovered at Urum, in Edo State, the compound with good houses and boreholes belong to parents whose children are prostitutes in Italy. Some of the young girls interviewed by Eke in 2007 there said they didn't mind the danger if they would change the future of their parents.

## **2. Breakdown of Values**

According to Godwin Morka Lagos Zonal Office, NAPTIP, In the interview he granted Newswatch Magazine on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2006 one of the causes of human trafficking is the breakdown of values. In those days, you had what you called family name. People protected their family names. They were afraid of doing anything that would bring their family names to disrepute. But now, according to Morka, parents are ready to do anything, including selling their children because of money, people say it is because of poverty but it is wrong. Not every poor person sends his/her children to slavery. Investigation revealed that greed rather than poverty accounts more for human trafficking. Some of the trafficked persons are from rich homes. Some rich parents encourage their daughters to go to Italy and prostitute and send them dollars. So we find out that greed is the main cause of human trafficking.

## **3. The size of a family**

The size of a family and the number of children in it who require special care place demand on the family which if it becomes unbearable may be expressed in form of child trafficking or child abuse or in the form of aggression towards the children.

#### **4. Quack Recruitment Agents.**

Another factor responsible for human trafficking and child abuse is quack recruitment agents. According to Gab Ikechukwu, Chairman Might Hope Recruitment Services in an interview he granted Dan Agbese of Newswatch on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2008 those who entered the business of recruitment agents without moral base spoil it because they are ready to do anything, no matter how inhuman. If you do it with fear of God in you, he further noted, you will not do anything that will harm any member of the society. The business should be a humanitarian one: giving job to the jobless and services to those who need them. According to him, the welfare of both parties should concern the genuine agent. It is those that think only of money that give away the person who will enslave them. These categories, according to Ikechukwu, are in the majority.

#### **5. Porous nature of our borders**

According to the Deputy Controller of Immigration in-charge of some Border Post, Gbuuga Aondoaver, in his defence when he appeared before the Senate Committee on Immigration the porousness of our border accounts for the reasons why trafficking still pass through land borders. As he puts it “our borders are porous. It is very difficult to check movement of people”. According to him the only solution is Auto Gate. If Auto-Gate is installed at the borders, the rowdiness will be checked and the criminals will easily be detected.

#### **5. Traditions and Culture**

Mbaye (2008) argued that the tradition of many West African Countries encourages the “placing” of young children with families of wealthier relatives to resume an education or learn a trade some traditions put the care of the child on the extended family. In such cultures, it is the responsibility of the extended family to train the children up to adulthood. This practice provides social balance and is meant to cushion the effect of poverty among the extended family members. It is also intended to stop vicious circle of poverty by placing the children of the poor with wealthier relatives for proper care and upbringing. This is the tradition that the traffickers exploit, as some parents ignorantly solicit their help, believing that as their relatives, they will take good care of their children.

6. **Religion**

Hoffiman (1974) opined that in the northern part of the country, the alamarjiri factor makes, it is very difficult to detect human traffickers. Among Muslims he continued it is a religious injunction for the rich to gather as many indigent children as they can take care of. However, the traffickers abuse it for selfish purpose. They disguise themselves as malams and use the children under their care to acquire personal wealth without caring for the young lads.

7. **Peer Pressure**

Some children become victim of human trafficking because of pressure from their peers especially friends. These children seeing their friends from the cities seemingly better off than they, want to go to the cities by every available means. They even go for the traffickers to be recruited.

8. **Lack of Information**

Another cause of human trafficking and child abuse is lack of information. Okojie (1981) argued that traffickers with gainful job opportunities usually deceived many ignorant children. Because they are not well informed, they do not see the bait in such promises as they fall into the traps carefully laid out by the human traffickers. And on and on, the circle swirls.

9. **Social economic situation**

Socio-economic situation in the country has made the practice of domestic child labour inevitable. As Onyebuagu (2005) noted, domestic child labour is very prevalent in the African society and the developing countries as a whole because of the extended family system and the poverty level in the society. As a result of the prevailing economic situations, some parents use to give out their child to relations or friends in order to help them take care of the child. Such child may be an object of abuse.

10. **Weakness of our law**

Eze (2008) is of the view that weakness of our law is another contributory factor to human trafficking and child abuse. According to him weakness of our law and lack of stiff punishment for those who, sexually assault the under aged girls. He blamed the authorities responsible for lack of implementation of law on human trafficking and child abuse.

11. **Having unwanted baby**

Having an unwanted baby can result to child abuse as the child is already hated even before he/she is born. In our society today many kids are giving birth to babies they are not mature enough to take care of. This accounts for sale of babies in hospitals.

## **Consequenses of Human Trafficking and Child Abuse in Our Society**

### **1. Denting of Nigeria's Image**

The gory tales of Nigerian girls doing sex work in Italy and other European countries is another manifestation of human trafficking and child abuse. According to Ugwu (2008) Nigerian Children mostly girls between the ages of 10 and 18 years were used for forced Labour and as sex toys in Gabon, Equatorial Gunea, Cameroun, Guinea, Republic of Benin, Cote d'ivoirie and Saudi Arabia. Today, human trafficking, child abuse and other inhuman practices like contract and causal labour have combined to taint Nigeria's image as, perhaps the centre of modern day slavery.

### **2. Denial of Educational Opportunities**

In April 2008, Igwe Aja-Nwachukwu then Minister of Education put an official seal on what had long been in the realms of speculations when he said at a press conference to mark the 2008 Education for All (EFA) week. "Nigeria accounts for over 11 millions out of 80 million children who are out of school in the world". He regretted that the alarming figure was an indication that the country was far from achieving EFA goals by 2015. A breakdown of this figure shows that 4.7 million of the children are of Primary School age, while 5.3 million are of secondary school age. In all this, 62 per cent of the children out of school are girls, while 38 percent are boys. This explains why so many girls are all over the country selling wares. Many of them are either sexually abused or lured into prostitution.

### **3. Unfulfilled Opportunity Promises**

The story of Obumneke Sunday, a 13-year old boy readily comes to mind. Brought to Lagos in 2006 from Onicha Uboma Local government of Delta State by a distant relation after his Primary School, he was told he would get paid to enable him save up to learn a craft. But since he came to Lagos, he has been selling puff puff for the man's wife. Obumneke, telling his sordid story said: I do not rest. In the morning, I help in frying the puff puff with Madam before she goes to work. Then, I will carry them in a case and take to Motor Parks and bus stops. Sometimes, I comeback by 6 pm or later then I will help in household chores and in mixing floor for the next day's business. Any time I asked my Oga when I would start Learning the trade, he will say very soon. But the 'soon' never came.

#### 4. **Return of Slave Camp**

Another consequence of child abuse and human trafficking is that it has resulted in the return of slave camp in Nigeria. In his chilling accounts of child slaves, Eke (2008) reported that the discovery of a slave camp in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria, by men of the Nigeria Police, where 23 youths between the ages of 13 and 27 were subjected to inhuman treatment by a certain Alfa Abdult Ganiyu Imoniyi is the most recent case of how evil men have used religion to perpetrate evil against humanity. Imoniyi, pretending to be an Islamic Scholar and Alfa and Omega deceived parents, who gave him custody of their children. But he was to turn such victim into animals, feeding them with excreta. Though he claimed that some of the children in his camp were hemp addicts teaching them the way of Allah, the condition of the camp and the chilling accounts of the inmates proved he is, indeed, a criminal as well as a human trafficker.

## 5. **Commercialization of New born babies**

Eke (2008) argued that another consequences of child abuse and human trafficking is the commercialization of newborn babies. As he put it “another face of the callous but booming trade is the cross counter sell of newborn babies”. Not too long ago, an Ibadan based couple was arrested when they went to negotiate for a buyer for one of their children. At the same period, a medical elector in the employment of a Catholic hospital, Immaculate Heart Hospital Umudioga, Dunukofia Local Government Area of Anambra State was arrested by the police for alleged, theft of three babies, whom he sold at the cost of ₦170, 000.00 each. Luck ran out on the doctor when some of those he sold the babies came back to him for more purchases and were immediately arrested following a tip off. It was in the course of interrogation that one of them confessed that she bought her own at ₦170, 000.00 from the doctor.

In some parts of the South-east and Lagos, Ochai (2009) some hospitals, maternity homes and motherless babies homes admit pregnant girls who do not want to keep their babies after delivery. They took care of them until they put to bed. Then they are paid an agreed sum of money depending on the sex of the baby and condition of delivery. Those who delivered without any complexity such as ceaseran section according to Ochai are paid higher than those who had any form of difficulty during labour. Male babies are priced higher than female ones. Those of them who renege after delivery are made to pay exorbitant amount of money as hospital bill. If they can't pay they are detained and subjected to diverse manners of maltreatment until they pay or yield to the agreement.

In a collaborative story, Azubike (2009) narrated how Dr. James Ezuma, the medical director of the hospital in Aba where babies are delivered and sold has been on the run. According to him, Dr. James Ezuma is still at large a month after his hospital was sealed off. A team of policemen drafted to seal the hospital has not been able to arrest him. The seal off of the hospital was in response to Newswatch exclusive story in its January 12, 2009 edition titled “Booming trade in sale of babies in Aba”. Newswatch has reported that Ezuma Medical director of the Hospital was involved in illegal activities and unwholesome medical practices using under-age girls.

The magazine reported that the hospital widely known in the city of Aba as baby factory, camped young girls who get pregnant and deliver babies for sale to couples in need of children. The hospital enjoyed good patronage from those who needed children but at huge costs. As at the time News watch investigated the story, there were pregnant young girls aged between 12 and 21 on admission who would have their babies delivered for sale. Newswatch? also discovered that Dr. Ezuma encouraged patronage by giving out financial rewards to those who introduced such pregnant girls and baby buyers to the hospital. Couples in dire need of babies paid about ₦400, 000.00 for each male child and ₦350, 000.00 for female.

#### **6. Using Religion as a disguise**

Chukwu (2008) brought out this clearly when gave account of how one Muslem was using religion as a disguised to engage in this unwholesome act. According him Umaru Keffi is case in point. Before he was arrested by the Saudi Arabian government and handed over to an agent of the Nigerian government early this year, he had

trafficked hundreds of girls and children to that ancient city and other European Countries under the cloak of religion. Since helping the less privileged in society is one of the pillars of Islam, he pretended he was taking care of them. But he sent them to different homes of his clients for use as domestic or sex slaves. He was also involved in trafficking disabled beggars to big cities. Once there, they begged and made money which they turned over to his agents on daily basis. Trafficking in person is a crime against humanity.

Nduka, et al (1984) argued that human trafficking and child abuse occurs daily in different situation, places in Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. According Nsiegunam (1999), the incidence is not given wide publicity, which tends to becloud the existence of such a practice. Consequently, it is not generally regarded as a social problem.

According to UNICEF, an estimated 158 million children aged 5 to 14 are engaged in child labour –one in six children in the world. Millions of children are engaged in hazardous situation or conditions. Such as working in mines; working with chemicals and pesticides in agricultures, or working with dangerous machinery. They are everywhere but invisible toiling as domestic servants in homes, Labouring behind the walls of workshops, hidden from view in plantations.

This situation basically goes contrary to the United Nation's declaration on human rights, which guarantees, among other things, the unconditional right of the child to Life. This is because abused children are not only low on the indices of social, moral and physical development, but their cognitive development is equally affected

adversely. From the above discussions so far, it is quite clear that there are established cases of misuse of children, especially with regards to functions relating to certain responsibilities either in form of farm work or street hawking or prostitutions or child labour which many children in the African culture are subjected to these days as a result of human trafficking and child abuse.

#### **8. Causalization of Labour**

According to Linus Ukachukwu in an interview he granted the source magazine on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2008, dehumanization of workers began when oil companies begin to give out some aspects of their operations to contractors to do. According to him this resulted in inhuman treatment called causalization of labour. Causalisation is an ill-wind that blows neither Nigerians nor the Nigerian economy any good. The worth of a nation is the worth of her human resources. The mineral resources will be used up. Oil will go. It is the human resources of the country that will make it survive beyond this period. If the human resources are being dehumanized in the name of causalisation, it portends a bleak future. People work and they take nothing home. And the government does not care, and the employers do not care. We are fast moving towards disaster. Inhuman treatment in Nigeria is creating an unsafe environment.

#### **9. Proliferation of Social Idiots in our society**

Child abuse and human trafficking has lead to proliferation of social idiots in our society. Many of the trafficked girls are either sexually abused or lured into prostitution, which more often than not result in pregnancy and birth of unwanted babies.

#### **10. Poor Health Conditions**

Black et al (2006) in his work effect of early childhood adversity on child health discovered that adverse environmental exposures including child abuse and other household dysfunction are associated with poor health especially at early stage.

#### **What Should be Done**

In view of the pervasive and penetrative effects of human trafficking and child abuse, on Nigeria and Nigerians, there is urgent need to implement all Laws on trafficking in person and related offence. Again, the Law, which stipulates that children less than 18 years should not work outside their family environment, should be enforced.

Secondly, dissemination of information is necessary. As Lilian et al (2004) noted a good deal of responsibility for preventing child abuse depends upon community member reporting abuse of child to child-protective services like ANPCAN. Through accurate dissemination of information the possible to develop indicators of maltreatment, physical abuse, social abuse, neglect and emotional abuse. Through it, it will be possible to know symptoms of potential child abuse.

Thirdly the Law enforcement agents should devise measures making seaport and airport impossible for the traffickers to traffic human beings to various European Countries.

Fourthly, there is the need to wage war against poverty. The ability to successfully, reduce poverty, is the starting point of victory over child abuse and human trafficking. Research findings indicate that neglect, psychological abuse, physical abuse, server sexual abuse and number of types of child abuse experience where associated with poverty. The government should address the issue of poverty in society. They should work seriously to alleviate the suffering of the people. Unless this is done, no war against human trafficking can be won.

Fifthly, there is need to stop causalisation as an employment policy of companies. Causalisation is an ill-wind that blows neither Nigerians nor Nigerian economy any good. The worth of a country is the worth of her human resources.

Sixthly, there is need to check the porous nature of our border. The government should install Auto-gate. If we have auto-gate, it would make the job of checking the in and out flow of people through the border easier. Also, effort should be made to be patrolling pathways leading to our neighbouring countries in order to check the activities of the traffickers.

### **Conclusion**

Human trafficking and child abuse are crime, against humanity. It is evil, stannic, devilish and against the principle of any religion on earth. It attracts Local, National and International Condemnation. It has tainted Nigeria's Image as perhaps the centre of modern-day slavery. Millions of children across the country are getting far ahead of their normal time due to early exposure to the tough world of breadwinners. Many of the children who should be in school today are out of it eking out precarious living on the streets of major cities. In fact, about eleven million Nigerian children are out of school. As a result of that, many of the children would later develop low self-esteem, dissatisfaction, poor self-confidence and psychological distress because such children feel despondent when they see their colleagues succeeding later in life. Most of them are engaged in child Labour and vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Human trafficking and child abuse have resulted in sexual abuse, prostitution child Labour, causalisation of workers etc. It has resulted in proliferation of social idiots in our society as many kids are giving births to kids they are not mature enough to take care of eradication of human trafficking and child abuse is a MUST that MUST be done for it is inhuman, illegal, irrational, barbaric, ungodly and against the tenets of any known religion.

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