



THE INCIDENCE OF BABY FACTORY AS A NEW TREND OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the incidence of baby factory in Nigeria. The authors are of the opinion that baby farming or baby harvesting is a new issue that is serious enough to be called a crime against humanity. The authors further stressed the need to use advocacy to deal with this rather unfortunate experience in our society. Also, the causes of human trafficking in Nigeria were highlighted and recommendations were made with a view to stemming the phenomenon of human trafficking.

Keywords: Baby factory and human trafficking.

Introduction:

Human trafficking is regarded as a crime against humanity. Attoh (2009), regarded human trafficking as “the unlawful movement of young women across international borders for certain exploitative purposes.” Whether the consent of such a person was sought and approval given before the said movement is considered not important and what most likely qualifies a victim as a trafficked person is that the individual would be in another environment where he or she would be subjected to doing things against his or her will. In other words, the fundamental rights of freedom of movement, association and even expression may have been denied the victim/s in question.

According to United Nations Office on Drug and Crime (UNODC) 2012 global report in trafficking reveals that human trafficking is a serious crime and global phenomenon involving

millions of victims at least 136 different nationalities around 118 countries worldwide. Trafficked persons are exploited in different economic sectors and for various purposes, thus human trafficking has formed the basis of organised crime in various developed and developing economies because of the overwhelming wealth generated from the dubious enterprise.

However, trafficking is common in women and girls and it is not completely new. According to a recent United Nations Organisation for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO, 2006) human trafficking has taken different forms but the trend in the context of globalization, which include the worst of all forms of human trafficking issue and dehumanising conditions in the world which is the rising cases of trafficking in children. It is as a result of monetary gains, which results in the victims being traded from conception, priced and paid for in their first few days on earth. This shows that the victims of this child trafficking are usually under-aged children who are helpless and barely know their rights to reach for social protection.

Overview of Baby Factories

The term baby factory has been interchangeably used with ‘baby farms’ or baby harvesting’. According to Onuora (2014), baby factories refers to all acts involved in the transfer, sales or receipts of baby(ies) 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. Also Madike,(2013) opined that baby factory is usually disguised as maternity homes, orphanages, social welfare homes, clinics and informal water bottling factories and are operated by well-organised criminal syndicates. Madike further observed that the perpetrators are usually the owners of these facilities, with some of them being medical doctors and they run this ‘business’ with the help of employees among whom may be men specifically hired to impregnate women and girls.

In recent years, traffickers in Nigeria have started exploiting their victims for ‘baby harvesting’ which is indeed an extension of child trafficking. The first case of baby harvesting was reported in 2006 by UNESCO in its policy paper. UNESCO (2006) stated that the first reported case of the phenomenon of baby factory in Nigeria were in Abia, Lagos and Ebonyi states. The UNESCO report which covered eleven states in Nigeria shows that many of the cases were reported in clinics and orphanages with doctors, nurses and orphanage operators being involved.

Baby factory now serves as an avenue for human trafficking which is ranked the third most common crime in Nigeria, after financial fraud and drug trafficking. From 2006 till date, the proliferation of baby factory in Nigeria has actually taking more treacherous and multifarious dimensions. Hence baby factory has become an emergent human trafficking industry and steady source of income to criminal cohorts involved in the act particularly in the south-east region of Nigeria. Furthermore, Madike (2013) observed that many of the residents in communities in the identified states know traders, where they operate but watch helplessly as the babies are being sold into modern slavery or for ritual purposes Baby harvesting in Nigeria has indeed taken a more dangerous and intricate form involving human activities. According to media reports, teenage girls and young women are brought by traffickers to these baby factories with false promises of jobs or safe abortions and as a result of this they are confined and force to give birth. Some of the victims are trafficked while being pregnant and others are later impregnated by men specially hired for such purposes. Allegedly, their babies are sold for international or domestic adoptions, rituals, slave and labour of sexual exploitation (Uduma, Vanguard, July 30, 2011).

Causes of Baby Factory

International Crimes Database (2013) revealed the following as the root causes of baby factory:

Education: Lack of education and low literacy level contribute to the poverty problem and poor standard of living, since they limit women's and children's opportunities to get better rewarded jobs in the future. This may also allow traffickers to entice their victims with promises of receiving education and acquiring skills.

Corruption: This is another major problem in Nigeria, particularly among police and judges which can be easily bribed to reach favourable outcomes for alleged traffickers. Corruption of law enforcement and judges makes the arrest and prosecution of traffickers inefficient and contributes to high profit and low risk of the human trafficking "business," including "baby factories" in Nigeria.

Lack of information and awareness: Lack of information and awareness about human trafficking and in particular "baby factories" make women and children more susceptible to this phenomenon. Many people in Nigeria do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes human trafficking. Thus when approached by traffickers, victims may not anticipate either their

future exploitation or lack of freedom and extreme living conditions. As a result, they become easier targets for deception by traffickers. Also due to lack of awareness of human trafficking, people do not recognise it and cannot report it promptly to the law enforcement. Even legal professionals in Nigeria do not fully understand this phenomenon, making prosecution of traffickers even more challenging.

Gender discrimination: Traditional Nigerian society considers girls to be inferior to boys and tolerates violence against women. Parents regard girls as a poor investment and are unwilling to send them to schools, finding them more suitable for domestic work. This in turn limits girls' future opportunities to find a well-paid job and provide for themselves and ensures a steady supply of women and teenage girls for traffickers, including those operating "baby factories."

Social stigmas: This contribute to the existence of "baby factories" in Nigeria are those against teenage pregnancies, pregnancies out of wedlock, couples' infertility and legal adoptions. The teenage pregnancies and pregnancies out of wedlock ensure that there is an abundant supply of women, teenage girls, and their new-borns at such "baby factories." While infertility of couples and legal adoption promote demands for such babies, since "adoptive" parents pass off these babies for their biological infants to avoid cultural and societal disapproval and stigma against proper sex education for teenagers and babies born outside a marriage. Furthermore, ignorance leading to diabolism (using children used for rituals) Huge cost required in seeking medical assistance despite great achievement in medical sciences to assist barren couple, InVitro Fertilization (IVF) for instance cost nothing less than 1milllion naira for each attempt.

Challenges of Combating Baby Factory in Nigeria

Preference of relatives of rescued pregnant girls to settle out of court and reluctance of rescued pregnant teenage girls to present themselves as witness and victims in the law court

Deficient legal frameworks and weak policy implementation which is as a result of poor reporting and monitoring of cases by law enforcement agencies and poor data collection and analysis of baby factory cases are issues that impinge on the incidence of child trafficking in Nigeria. Also, interference of very influential persons or state actors and prevalence of

corruption in the judicial and police system

Health Implications of Baby Factory

The following results in the health of these young girls used for baby farming:

Lack of ante natal care as they are restricted from moving around and they stand the risk of contacting life threatening infections as well as the new born baby.

Malnutrition of the mother which in turn affect the development of the baby while in the womb and after delivery which leads to depression, physical and mental health of the mothers and there is also a high tendency for vulnerable infections such as Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in line with the incidence of baby factories emergence in Nigeria:

1. National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) should improve on its anti-trafficking awareness campaigns and that the “baby factory” issue is included into their agenda and also the amendment of NAPTIP Act, and imposition of strict punishment to culprits.
2. Education of law enforcement personnel, lawyers and judges on “baby factories” and its relationship with human trafficking and employ reputable law firms to handle “baby factories” cases on a pro bono basis.
3. Subsidizing health services and subsidizing fertility treatment, improving monitoring of the activities of orphanage and maternity homes, developing programs that will break social stigmas and taboos that encourage the operation of “baby factories.”
4. State government should collaborate with international agencies to create a child friendly environment to overcome the baby factory scourge and take pre-emptive actions against the culprits. Child life protection Act should be made to prohibit and punish persons caught in the sale of babies in Nigeria under any guise as well as protect the rights of children from conception to birth and not just those children that have been delivered of.

5. Enlightenment campaigns to overcome the Nigeria baby factory phenomenon its dangers among people who are more likely to become victims of this type of human trafficking, making each state fit for a child and the general human population should be championed by Health educators (social change engine), all gate keepers and stakeholders from all walks of life with all sincerity, commitment, and enthusiasm.

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