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The Influence of Poverty on Human Trafficking in Contemporary International System: Impact on Third World Countries

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Abstract

This paper examined the influence of poverty on human trafficking in contemporary international system and its impacts on third world countries. Poverty was seen as the single most important factor that caused human trafficking. The theoretical framework adopted was Paul Prebiseb dependency theory. This theory stated that the dependence of third world countries on developed countries is the main cause of underdevelopment and poverty of the third world countries. This is so because the developed countries control and dominate the international capitalist economy and thus create policies and initiatives that impoverish third world countries thus necessitating migration from third world countries to the first world countries. The study argued that poverty contributed greatly to human trafficking. The study also observed that most people allowed themselves to be trafficked out because of their attempt to escape poverty back home. Others trafficked in drugs, contraband goods and engage in other shady businesses in order to escape poverty. Young girls are trafficked out for sexual exploitation and other menial jobs majorly because of poverty back home. Human trafficking was seen as contributing immensely to political, economic, social and security upheavals in third world countries. The study concluded that as a major component of organized crime with enormous financial power, human trafficking has a complex negative impact across the international system. As a way out of this political, social, economic and security cul-de-sac, it was recommended that government of third world countries should create more job opportunities for their citizens, strengthen the implementation of immigration laws, embarked on adequate enlightenment to tell people about the dangers of human trafficking among others.

INTRODUCTION

Poverty is one of the strongest push factors for human trafficking in third world countries. In fact most of those who are trafficked out of Nigeria and other third world countries are those who try to escape poverty back home. Their belief is that grasses are greener in other

countries than their own. Thus, they japa (move) out of their mostly poor countries to countries they believe have better opportunities for them to work, earn a living and make remittances back home. Also, most of those who are involved in human and organs trafficking engage in this illegal and despicable business to ‘earn’ a living and to escape poverty. Victims of human trafficking are mostly from poor countries, poor families, and poor background. Their belief is to go outside their poverty-stricken countries to the ‘new world’ countries which they believe are better governed with good job opportunities to work and make money.

Most third world countries are politically unstable, economically weak, and militarily dependent on world power for their survival. Besides, most, if not all of these third world countries are indebted to Bretton woods institutions as a result of incessant borrowings to finance social programmes and infrastructures. They increasingly see the developed countries of Western Europe and America as big brothers and “Father Christmas”, not minding that these loans will hang as albatross on the neck of these third world countries and extend to future generations thus exacerbating the incident of poverty in these countries. This is so because these incident of poverty in these countries. This is so because these third world countries will remain in the “bondage” of servicing these loans in several years to come and continue to push the people of these countries deep down the abyss of poverty. Third world countries usually expect political, economic, financial and military aids from these developed economies of the west.

Furthermore, the developed countries or the first world countries have adopted several strategies to keep third world countries perpetually dependent on them for survival. One of such strategies is giving loans to these third world countries after meeting certain stringent conditionalities which in the long run will work in favour of the donor countries and continuously keep these third world countries in poverty chain that appears difficult to break. This paper therefore seeks to examine how poverty in third world countries influences human trafficking in contemporary international system and impact on third world countries.

Human Trafficking in the International System

States that fail in its functions to the people, have their citizens leave such states to seek for greener pastures in other strong, well organized and prosperous states. Some leave on their own, others are trafficked out as cheap labour to these developed or better organized states. This is what culminates in human trafficking. Human trafficking involves trade in human beings. Trafficking means illegal or unlawful trading of something prohibited. Trafficking may involve drugs, stolen goods or anything prohibited by law.

Human trafficking is defined by Kenb, Ijeoma, Nwamuo and Anyaoha (2016) as an illegal act of recruiting or trading on person(s) for commercial exploitation. According to the United Nations (UN) 2013, human trafficking refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation, forced labour and services, slavery and such other similar

inhuman practices. Poverty leads to both migration and trafficking in which victims move from conditions of extreme poverty to conditions of less-extreme poverty. This is one condition that seriously engenders human trafficking.

Conceptual Explication

In order to enhance a better understanding of this paper, we find it necessary to throw light on the following concepts as used in this work.

Poverty: This is a situation where a person or group of persons is unable to provide his or her basic needs. These basic needs are necessary for the survival of any individuals. The inability to provide these basic needs is what usually pushes people to look for job in order to earn a living. Failure to get a job usually exacerbates poverty.

Human Trafficking: This usually involves the movement of persons across national boundaries for work, exploitation, and businesses, among others. Trafficking is not limited only to humans but also includes trafficking on drugs, human organs, contraband goods etc.

Contemporary international systems: This is a global system of inter-relationship among different countries and continents of the world. All these different countries and continents have been incorporated into the world capitalist system so that economic exchanges and transactions can take place.

Third world Countries: These are seen as poor, backward and developing countries of the world that lack basic ingredients of development such as good roads, potable water, constant electricity, employment opportunities, functional education, good health care etc. Poverty rate is very high in third world countries as a result of economic mismanagement, corruption and political instability. Most of the third world countries are found in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Carribeans.

It is believed by Marxist Scholars that the under development of these third world countries enhances development of the first world countries. In other words, the under development of the third world countries is dependent on the development of the metropole. Resources of third world countries are used to enhance the development of the west. It is the development of the west or first world that attracts migrants from third world countries. Most of these migrants believe that Western Europe and America are rich countries that can make them rich if they travel there and work. They also believe there are abundant employment opportunities in these continents and their currencies are equally strong that can help them make remittances back home. Western Europe and American thus becomes the beautiful bride that attracts many suitors from third world countries.

These “suitors” believe that Western Europe and America have the magical wand that can by the snap of a finger, turn their poverty into wealth.

Thus, because of the assumed wealth of the first world countries, third world countries expect so much from these developed countries politically, financially and in terms of military aids.

The definition of human trafficking by the United Nations contains three major things: the ACT, MEANS and PURPOSE>

ACT (what is done): Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons.

MEANS (how it is done): Through threat, coercion, abduction, deception and monetary inducement.

PURPOSE (why it is done): For the purpose of commercial exploitation. Human trafficking is a kind of modern day slavery where people are lured, tricked or forced to work against their will for the profit of others.

The victims of human trafficking are made to believe that they will be sent to schools, secure well-paid jobs, run lucrative businesses overseas which will help improve their standard of living (Kenb, et al, 2016).

The traffickers smartly convince the victims into believing that all is well in the destination countries not knowing that they will be engaged in degrading domestic work or child labour, forced labour, prostitution, begging and servile marriage. Human trafficking is a multi-faceted illegal business that knows no borders and spares no race but majority of those trafficked are from third world countries. According to the UN (2003), trafficking of human beings is now the third largest source of money for organized crimes after arms and drugs.

Theoretical Framework

This work adopts Raul Prebiseb Dependency theory. The dependency theory states that the dependence of third world countries on developed countries is the main cause for the underdevelopment of the former.

According to apostle of dependency theory, the whole world is divided between two sets of countries – the developed countries or first world countries and less developed countries or third world countries. The former are in the centre – western Europe, Britain and the United States of America while the latter (third world countries) are in the periphery (that is backward countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America). (Peters, 2010).

Some dependency theorists like Santos (1970), Frank (1972), as well as Amin (1975), hold that the present economic and socio-political conditions prevailing in the periphery, that is, third world countries are the result of a historical international process that assigned to third world countries the role of producing raw materials while the core countries (First world countries) produce manufactured and sophisticated products and sold to third world countries at exorbitant rates. Santos (1970) further states that both the developed countries and third world countries are integral parts of the capitalist system, but the global system is such that the development of the center (first world countries) and third world countries are integral parts of the capitalist system, but the global system is such that the development of the centre (first world countries) occurs at the expense or underdeveloped of the periphery.

There exist three major formulations of dependency theory – neo – classical dependence theory, the false-paradigm model and the dualist-dependence model. All these theories tend to have similar view of the failure of many third world countries to undergo successful integration into the world capitalist system. Dependency theorists thus conclude that the wealth and

prosperity of the developed countries in Europe, North America and East Asia are dependent upon the poverty of the rest of the world.

Dependency theorists further argue that the west (developed countries) actively perpetuate dependency through various policies and initiatives including the giving of loans / grants, the use of trans-national companies, military training / assistance, award of scholarships, development aids, and several conditionalities before loans or assistance is given. All these conditions invariably favour the donor countries while impoverishing the third world countries and thus intensify the tempo of conflict and political instability which result in trafficking to these developed countries (Okereke & Ekpe, 2002).

The relevance of this theory to this work is that the first world countries, that is, the developed countries that control and dominate the international capitalist economy create policies and initiatives that impoverish and subjugate third world countries to their whims and caprices. The scenario is such that when the first world (developed countries) sneeze, third world countries catch cold. First world countries also create conditions that make their countries look strong, stable, attractive and rich while at the same time make third world countries seem weak, unstable, filthy and poor. Naturally these result in exodus of people from third world countries to these core or developed countries to escape poverty back home. Such poverty creates a source of cheap labour of immigrants to developed countries.

Poverty and Human Trafficking: The International Connection

Poverty may not be adequately defined for others to appreciate because it is a multifaceted phenomenon. One has to experience it before he understands it better. According to Ekong (1988), it is not only an expression of life condition, but a state of mind and a perception of self in the complex web of social relations. Economists tend to view poverty as a distance on a continuum towards zero purchasing power while its opposite – affluence, is a distance on the same continuum toward full purchasing power. This view of poverty in terms of purchasing power is useful when we consider who is able to get what in the society.

Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) report (2001) identifies three main types of poverty, namely, absolute poverty, relative poverty and zero-sum poverty. (Ekong, 1988)

Absolute poverty is connected to an insufficient resource base, lack of income, narrow margins, high risk of failure, hunger, disease etc.

Relative poverty according to Ekong (1988) “is misery linked to experiencing outcomes which are less satisfactory than those of relevant others while not being able to do much about improving one’s own outcome so that one has to adopt one’s aroused aspirations to one’s inescapable unsatisfactory outcomes instead of through innovation”.

On the other hand, zero-sum poverty is poverty linked to patronage, oppression, exploitation, usurpation, extraction and an abuse by powerful others.

Poverty, especially absolute poverty is one of the most significant drivers of human trafficking.

Absolute poverty is perceived as living with less than 1.90 Dollar a day. To find better work, many people migrate which makes them more vulnerable to traffickers. Because of poverty, some people sell their own family members, including their children to traffickers in

order to earn some money to escape poverty. Others connive with traffickers for their loved ones to be trafficked outside the country with the hope that their loved ones will get a chance of a better life outside the country and send remittance back home.

According to the United Nations Department of Defense and Crime in the Borgen Project (2015), “Poverty is a compelling factor in the human trafficking industry”.

Human trafficking occurs in every single country on the globe. It is a global epidemic that is mostly driven by poverty. The most common countries which victims are trafficked from are mostly in Eastern Europe, West Africa, Asia, Arab nations and North America.

The highest destination countries are Belgium, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom and the United States. (Borgen Project Report, 2015).

The main countries of origin of victims are Africa, Asia, Central and Eastern European countries, for Eastern European countries, former Eastern bloc and the defunct soviet countries, Latin America and the Carribean. The most prevalent among the main trafficking countries are: Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Nigeria, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Thailand and Ukraine, each with large population affected by extreme poverty (Borgen Project, 2015).

People experiencing extreme poverty are mostly vulnerable to traffickers due to the deplorable circumstances they face back home and also occasioned by desperation to japa (or move outside the country). The victims of trafficking are always forced to do other works other than what they were promised such as prostitution, hard labour, drugs peddling, organs harvesting business etc, with little or no pay, sometimes still making the victims live in poverty they tried to escape from home.

Those usually targeted by traffickers are persons mostly adolescents and teenagers for exploitation. In most instances, victims are told to work to pay off debts which include the cost of bringing them from their various countries of origin to the destination countries. Those who are unable to offset such debts are usually subjected to violence or handed over to the police and immigration officials. Others may be re-sold to many different other traffickers.

The Impact of Poverty on Human Trafficking in the International System

The human development approach recognizes that poverty is multi-faceted and dynamic with both monetary and non-monetary aspects, including social constraints and personal circumstances. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative and meaningful lives in accordance with their needs and interests (Danailova – Trainor and Laczko, 2010).

Poverty is often seen as the “root cause” of human trafficking. However, the links between poverty, lack of development and trafficking are interwoven. At the country level, poor economic, political and social infrastructure, which lead to poverty, conflict and bad governance which are inherent in failed states provide fertile ground for criminal activity and compel some people with limited access to resources to leave their country of origin and look elsewhere for

opportunities. The vast majority of men and women in third world countries seeking to escape poverty are lured into trafficking by the false promise of economic gain (Danailova – Trainor and Laczko, 2010).

A significant issue that cannot be separated from poverty and trafficking is that of gender and gender relations. Human trafficking is the only trans-national crime women are significantly represented, importantly, not only as victims but also as perpetrators and activists (Shelley, 2010). Gender discrimination and violence, forced marriage, and bonded labour are among the many practices that make people vulnerable and potential targets of both transnational and internal trafficking (Danailova-trainor and laczko, 2010). Trafficking in girls is most common in areas where girl child education is low and in situations where families use girls to advance their economic wellbeing.

Scholars such as Kenb, et al (2016); Danailova-Tranor and Laczko (2010); Aronowitz (2009), Belser (2005), have all agreed that poverty is one of the main causes of human trafficking in the contemporary international system. The vast majority of men, women and children seeking to escape poverty are lured into trafficking with the elusive hope of economic gain.

However, a study conducted by the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found no simple correlation between poverty and human trafficking. Almost all the countries studied in their work, (Albania, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Lithuania, Nigeria, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Thailand and Ukraine)_ are lower to upper-middle-income country of origin of trafficking victims with low human development indicator values (UNODC, 2006). However, it is also clear that economic, political, social, religious and ethnic crisis within, between and among countries, and regional conflicts in most parts of the world and sub-sahara Africa have contributed to a significant rise in poverty, which have contributed to a rise in trafficking (Aronowitz, 2009).

According to Kenb, et al (2016), poverty is the greatest cankerworm that has eaten up the social fabrics of the world. In their view, poverty is a major cause of human trafficking. In their own words:

...when there is abject poverty in the land and in a bid to survive, the people are ready to do anything, both as an agent and as victims of traffickers. This is why most impoverished countries have their citizens as the highest casualties and victims of human trafficking in the world.

This clearly shows that citizens of poor countries, mostly third world countries are the victims and agents of human trafficking in an attempt to escape poverty and economic hardship back in their respective home countries.

The Political Impact of Human Trafficking on Third World Countries

In addition to the tragic impact on individuals, human trafficking has now reached such a scale that it has begun to influence the domestic and foreign policies of many countries such that the problem has become particularly endemic. Also, because trafficking in persons involves the

movement of people across international borders, one of the most important areas of it, is migration policy. However, because trafficking in persons is also a deeply human issue, it has become a major issue of discussion and concern in human rights circles. Thus, so many states equate trafficking with “illegal migration” or “smuggling of aliens” or movement of “asylum seekers”, although these phenomena are not the same (Shelley, 2010). Thus, trafficking has helped to shape migration policies in countries both of origin and destination. In third world countries, the impact is particularly serious. Recently, European Union (EU) as a bloc is enacting immigration policies that discriminate against third world countries in movement of people into other countries as a result of this problem (Borgen Project, 2015).

Border control is another response area. There is increased law enforcement around borders in these affected countries. There is also the impact of the abuse of human rights and the increasing cost in governance in an attempt to contain the problem in the third world countries. Again, there is also the impact of the abuse of human rights of citizen from the countries of origin where people are forcefully trafficked out of the country against their will.

The Economic Impact of Human Trafficking on Third World Countries

The cost of crime is essentially a measure of the impact of that crime on the society. The costs of trafficking include the value of all resources devoted to its prevention, the treatment and support of victims and the apprehension and prosecution of offenders. For example, as a component of organized crime, there are costs to the police (who investigate suspected crime and gather and record evidence), the prosecution services, criminal courts, legal aid and non-legally aided defense costs, and costs of the prison (correctional centres administration of the victims) and probation services. There may also be costs to witness protection schemes and health, welfare and other government services; expenditure on trafficking prevention programmes, advocacy and research project, among others (Aronowitz, 2009). All these impact negatively on the economy of the third world countries.

Another area of economic impact is lost resources. Human trafficking results in the loss of human resources and reductions in revenue. Trafficking yields no tax revenues, and may even lead to a net revenue loss as a result of tax evasion. When the victims are repatriated back to their countries of origin, the burden of such repatriation is usually borne by the third world countries which are already poor and most time devastated by poverty (Belser, 2005). However, it must be acknowledged that most third world countries also benefit directly or indirectly from human trafficking. This is so because some of the trafficked individuals usually end up procuring lucrative jobs in the destination countries and thus make some remittances back home which may help to boost or rejuvenate the economic health of most of these economically ailing third world countries (Borgen Project, 2015).

Trafficking undermines law enforcement efforts, slow down economic growth, raises the cost of regional trade and disrupts the transition to a market economy (Sofia, 2003). In most regions or countries of origin and destination, trafficking in persons along with its links to organized crime has endangered human lives as well as national security. For example, trafficking in persons is described in the European security strategy (ESS), as one of the five key threats for the region.

In many countries, in particular in source areas, the prioritization of anti-human trafficking efforts compete with a wide range of significant national concerns, such as addressing poverty, corruption, and or civil unrest as well as competing demands for scarce resources (Esson, 2020). As long as people continue to benefit from it, human trafficking may not come to an end any time soon.

Conclusion

The work examined the influence of poverty on human trafficking in contemporary international system with a focus on its impact on third world countries. Human trafficking causes extreme hardship to the suspected millions of people worldwide, especially in the predominantly third world societies which have incessantly become victims of this crime. Human trafficking has negative impact on the financial markets, the economies and the social structures of countries where trafficking is allowed to flourish. In the social structures, people are separated from their families, sometimes for life as a result of death or refusal to come back home. As a major component of organized crime with its enormous financial power, trafficking in persons has a complex and interlocking negative impact across human, social, political and economic facets of the society. It should be noted however, that trafficking is not limited only to humans but also includes trafficking on drugs, human organs, contraband goods etc.

The destabilizing and dangerous consequences of human trafficking across international borders range from readily recognized violence, direct economic losses and major migration concerns to the less easily quantified but equally serious, but with more debilitating effects or risks and harms to environment. Human trafficking also has social, health and safety challenges as well as violations of human rights. Trafficking in persons directly challenges the development of a stable and more prosperous society. The range of trafficking related crimes and their broad and interrelated impacts have created a cumulative threat to global peace, security and stability of the polity and have shaped political, social and economic responses at both national and global levels.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to checkmate the problem of poverty on human trafficking in the contemporary international system

- (i) Government of third world countries should create more job opportunities for their large army of jobless citizens if ever they are serious in making human trafficking less

- attractive. This will hopefully checkmate the drift and quest to “japa” or go to foreign countries for greener pastures or the so called proverbial Golden Fleece
- (ii) Immigration laws should be stringently implemented to inhibit reckless borders infiltration by questionable elements some of whom reasons for migration are dubious and detrimental to national and international interests and security.
 - (iii) That there should be adequate enlightenment, education and awareness creation such that individual citizens would be sufficiently aware of the dangers of being trafficked since most victims in third world countries become victims as a result of ignorance of what they consented to. Thus, advocacy visits, seminars, international conferences and workshops should be organized to enlighten the people on the evils, dangers and consequences of human trafficking.
 - (iv) There is the need for inclusion of security studies or security education in school curricula in third world countries, from primary through tertiary levels. This will help in no small way to enlighten children on the effects of common crimes such as rape, child stealing, child trafficking, human trafficking, child labour, drug dealings, forced marriage, child marriage and the dangers inherent in engaging in them. The dangers of these common crimes will remind the youth what bleak future and consequences they will face if they embark on these ill-fated trips.
 - (v) Efforts should be made to breathe life into the economies of third world countries in order to arrest illegal migration since most victims of human trafficking do as a result of the bad economy in their home countries.
 - (vi) Finally, there should be international collaboration among state and non-state actors in order to effectively combat the menace of human trafficking in the contemporary international system

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