



Research Paper

The Menace of Human Trafficking and Hiv/Aids in the 21st Century; With Particular Reference To Some States; A Challenge To The Nigerian Nation

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Abstract

“The Menace of Human Trafficking And HIV/AIDS in the 21st Century, With Particular Reference To Some States; A Challenge To The Nigerian Nation”. This is a research work conducted for the reconstruction of the Social History of the episodes associated with the two interwoven subject matters of study mentioned above. The focus of the study centers on their causes, implications and impact on Nigerian Society. In the course of conducting the study relevant materials, quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection, presentation and analysis were used aimed at examining and highlighting how problematic, chronic, frustrating, destructive and disastrous the studied variables are to the social, biological, political, economic, cultural, religious and geographical life of the Nigerian people and society. The study argues that Human Trafficking greatly contributes in depopulating and underdeveloping the Nigerian economy and state at large. It is a major violation of Children Rights for it generates exploitative child labor since it involves agents for the illegal movement of Human Beings for illicit commercial and business dealings. Nigeria has been ranked as a major supplier and the simplest transit route for Human Trafficking. Recent studies have proved that about 8. Million Nigerian Children are engaged in exploitive child labor as 43% of them are based in the southern border towns of places like Calabar, Port-Harcourt and Owerri state but a few. The study also shows that 80% of children trafficked to Italy are from Africa and 60% out of them are Nigerians. Furthermore, Nigeria with an estimated population of 160, Million is second to South Africa in the number of people living with HIV/AIDS world-wide i.e representing 9% of the Global burden of the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate, by the year 2001 was 5.8%. Among the causes of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Nigerian area include; poor quality of Health Care Services, inequities, chronic and debilitating poverty and the persistence of HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination, and are also factors that forced many Agencies to morally and financially become committed aimed at combating against HIV/AIDS; namely UNICEF, UK, DFID, UNIFEM, HRD, NACA and International Religious Bodies. Finally, this is an incisive criticism and attempt for Social Historical reconstruction and a call for the Nigerian Policy Makers to rise to the responsibility alongside by creating full scale employment opportunities for the betterment and normal survival of the Nigerians as a way forward.

Keywords: Menace, Women, Trafficking, HIV/AIDS, 21st Century, Nigeria, Challenges, Forward.

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I. INTRODUCTION

For a proper understanding of the central direction of the study, it is therefore equally important to note that the study is undertaken to examine and portray the explored major obstacles generated and strongly associated with these subject matters of our writing namely; Human Trafficking and HIV/AIDS, in the 21st Century with specific example drawn from some Nigerian states. Certainly both the two are disastrous to the political, economic, social and cultural life of our beloved Nation, as they affect our population greatly. In view of the above, it is therefore interesting to state that part of the major areas the study will dwell much on include; conceptual framework, causes of the concepts under review, volume of Girl-child Trafficking and HIV/AIDS, Nigerian legal framework on the Rights of Children, How HIV/AIDS is contracted and not being contracted, HIV as an epidemic and disastrous to modern world's population in the 21st century; an overview, the

role of some Indigenous and International Agencies in preventing, eradicating HIV, guiding and counseling of PLWAS. At the tail end, the study proffers a way forward as a challenge to the Nigerian Nation.

Conceptual Clarification of the Terms; Human Trafficking and HIV/AIDS in Some Selected Parts of Nigerian Area

In the first and foremost, it is worthy to note that Trafficking of Children is a major violation of Children's Rights and a contributory factor to exploitative Child Labour. By definition, Child Trafficking involves agents for the illegal movement of Human Beings for illicit commercial and business dealings.¹ as far as current knowledge is concerned. Nigeria has today become a major supplier, consumer and a transit route for Human Trafficking particularly in the field of Girl-child. Millions of Children driven into different types of exploitative labour often become the most vulnerable groups.²

The Concept of HIV/AIDS

Universally, according to a recent fact from the joint United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS (UNIDS), about 22. Million children, youths and adults have since died of HIV/AIDS. Nigeria is one of the countries largely affected by HIV/AIDS in the world today.³ it has since been estimated that about 3 million Nigerians, most of them aged between 15 and 49 are infected with HIV. And by the year 2003 about 4.9 million Nigerians were infected which resulted in generating a major socio-economic impact on the Nigerian society⁴. The term HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus. In fact, it is the germ that causes AIDS. When somebody is infected with the virus. His/her body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal secretions are going to contain HIV and antibodies against the virus.⁵ Upon infection HIV stays in the body and slowly destroys the Body's Defense System (Soldiers of the Body). When the defense system no longer resists diseases the infected person becomes sick and is said to have AIDS. It is important to note that the duration of time it takes for the infected person to fall ill varies, and can take between several months to seven years, so an infected person can spread the virus unknowingly.⁶

What is Aids? When the virus has destroyed the Immune System the Symptoms of AIDS stands for Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome. At this stage, the body's natural defence system is weak and the infected person is vulnerable and at the mercy of all kinds of infections that might not have troubled those uninfected by HIV.⁷

The Volume of Human Trafficking and HIV/AIDS in Some Selected Parts of Nigerian Area: -

In fact, recent studies conducted have shown that about 8. Million Nigerian children are engaged in exploitative child labor, putting them at great risk of Human Trafficking, as 43% of them are based in the southern border towns. i.e places such as Calabar, Port-Harcourt and Owerri in particular.⁸ Furthermore, it has been estimated that about 19% of school Children in Nigeria work after school in exploitative and dangerous environments.⁹ Similarly, past studies recently conducted have proved that about 80% of children trafficked to Italy are from Africa and 60% of them are Nigerian citizens. For boys are mostly trafficked from south eastern parts, Imo and Abia, Akwa Ibom into Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Congo, while those from Kwara move to Togo and as far as Mali to work on the plantation.¹⁰ The question of Private Transit Camps exist in Akwa Ibom, Calabar and Ondo states where children are conveyed or transported from south eastern states and forced into hard Labor and prostitution. Movement is from rural to urban areas, especially during festive period most collection points were based in urban areas. However following the ongoing advocacy trafficking agents now a day operate from the rural areas.

There are two major types of trafficking namely: Internal and External types of trafficking:

Internal Trafficking: This occurs with movement from state to state originating from fostering and external family system coupled with inability of the child to trace family members.¹²

Middlemen cheat employers by receiving money in advance but do not allow the children to settle in one family or employment payment of the children's services often never reaches the poor parents.¹³ Many of the children particularly in the north move out of Qur'anic schools into the streets and are often used as human shields during religious conflict or as agents to ignite trouble.¹⁴

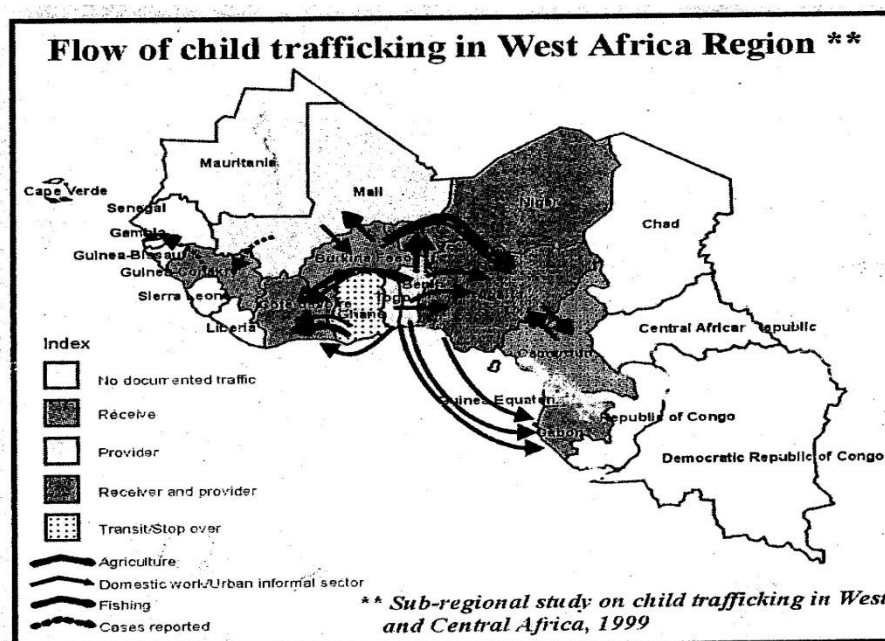
➤ Internal movement of children for trafficking usually occurs during festive periods and other cultural activities (March, April and December) being observed to reciprocate the socio- cultural gestures.

External Trafficking(not confined to Nigerian area):

➤ On average 10 children daily pass through Nigerian borders especially at Seme, Maiduguri, Sokoto, Calabar, and Katsina.

➤ Children from the south-south (Edo and Imo states) are the majority of those trafficked to Mali, Gabon, Saudi Arabia and Italy.¹⁵

➤ Socio- cultural and religious practices also facilitate easy movement of children to Sudan,¹⁶ Mali, and Saudi Arabia.



The Principal Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

The principal causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria are many but the major areas could be outlined as follows:

- Wide spread poverty sparking the push and pull factors to urban centers.
- Limited capacity of Customs and Immigration Agencies, making the borders very porous.
- Lack of frameworks and weak policy implementation.
- High level of illiteracy, unemployment and poor standard of living.
- Failure of the Nigerian policy makers to rise to the responsibilities.
- Increasing taste for materialistic values among youth aggravated by peer pressure.¹⁸
- Poor reporting and monitoring of case by Law Enforcement Agencies.
- High school dropout rates compiled with long closures of High Institutions of Learning.¹⁹
- Abuse of the common practice of placement and fostering, along with weakened extended family safety net
- Desperation of poor and illiterate parent with large families ignorant of the Impact of Child Trafficking (e.g. in east, trafficking agents reportedly give poor parents money for a boy or girl child to be trafficked).²⁰

The Volume of HIV/AIDS with Specific Examples Drawn From Some Selected Nigerian Areas:

Nigeria with an estimated population of 160 million (National Population Commission, 2014) is second to South-Africa in the number of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, representing 9 percent of the Global burden of the disease.²¹ By 1991, Nigeria has employed a Sentinel Surveillance System among pregnant women age 15-49 attending antenatal care to track HIV Prevalence. The result shown that HIV prevalence has declined over the years from 5.8 percent in 2001 to 4.6 percent in 2008 and 4.1 percent in 2010. In 2010, across the country's state HIV prevalence ranged from 1.0 percent in Kebbi state to 12.6 percent in Benue state.²²

Furthermore, other studies conducted have argued that since the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, as an epidemic and mostly deadly disease it has continued to threaten the survival of the Human Race.²³ UNAIDS statistics shows that over 40 million people are living with the virus globally and this continuously rises every day. In 1999, as pointed earlier over 2.8 million people died of AIDS. In sub Saharan Africa, it has been estimated that more than 60% of people are PLWAS (People Living with AIDS/Virus). In Nigeria, despite effort to combat against the epidemic HIV prevalence rate continues to increase at an alarming rate. Nigeria ranks second within Sub-Saharan Africa with the HIV/AIDS infected youth and adults. Nigeria's overall HIV prevalence rate is 5.8 %²⁴ However, it is important to note that it is the tragic threat of HIV/AIDS to Nigerian population, particularly the youth vis-à-vis the level of ignorance that has compelled this study to make a call for a **Nation Wide Awareness and Sensitization Campaign**. Although, the Nigerian state has put into action several interventions to reduce and control the spread of this deadly pandemic. But such interventions of the Nigerian state were fragmented and lacked the community and the scale needed to make any remarkable impact.²⁵ It was the above point raised that motivated UNICEF and its partners under the leadership of NACA to create the **Massive Awareness Raising Campaign on HIV/AIDS** code named (MARC).²⁶

Channels under Which HIV are Contracted, Not Being Contracted and Preventive Measures:

Since HIV is found in body fluids it can be transmitted when a fluid from an infected person enters the body of another person. This occurs primarily in the course of sexual intercourse, when blood is exchanged such as during blood transfusion, when using unspecialized skin-piercing instruments (e.g. needles, syringes, razor blades sharp objects and circumcision instruments), and from an infected mother to her infant during pregnancy, child birth or through the breast milk.²⁷ However, studies conducted have proved that 80% of people living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria were infected as a result of having sex with the already infected person.²⁸ HIV cannot be contracted by way of casual contacts such as hugging, touching, handshake, lip kissing, and staying in the same office or house with PLWAS. Similarly, HIV cannot be contracted from mosquitoes or other blood-sucking insects. Other ways through which HIV cannot be contracted include; sharing toilets, swimming pools. Utensils such as spoon, plates and cups. The last but not the least is that HIV cannot be contracted by caring for someone (not including sexual relations) infected with HIV.²⁹ However, part of the major preventive measures to apply against HIV/AIDS include; the following:

- Abstain from sex that is not having sex at all. This method is safe and the most effective preventive measure. This offers 100% guarantee from sex-related and ensures peace of mind, thereby encouraging and promoting the status of marriage. Which is highly legalized and respected?
- Avoid casual sex, stay and be faithful to your life partner.
- Apply or use condoms of approved quality properly.
- Do not share any sharp objects or instrument with anyone e.g. needle, syringe and so forth and
- Do not receive unscreened blood if you are in need of transfusion.³⁰

The Signs and Symptoms of AIDS:

Following infection with HIV, the progressive attack on the weakening and ultimately collapse of the defense mechanism thereby leaving the body open to all sorts of infection will begin to show major and minor symptoms of AIDS such as:

- Prolonged diarrhea
- White coating of the tongue
- Enlargement of gland in the neck, groin and armpit
- Persistent fever
- Persistent cough
- Skin infection and unexplained weight loss.³¹

Fundamental Right to People Living With HIV (PLWAS):

People living with HIV/AIDS are greatly challenged in every society. They experience feelings of rejection and isolation because many people show negative attitudes towards them. It is interesting to note that PLWAS have the same rights as everyone. Therefore, they deserve to be treated with respect and fairness regardless of the route of their infection. The right to PLWAS includes the followings:

- Right to love
- Right to shelter
- Right to health care
- Right to freedom of movement
- Right to freedom of speech
- Right to education
- Right to protection from discrimination
- Right to dignity/recognition of individuals
- Right to employment and
- Right to generate children³²

The Role of Some Indigenous and International Agencies in Preventing, Combating and Eradicating HIV/AIDS in Nigeria:

In any case, it is interesting to understand that recent studies conducted have indicated that new HIV infections in Nigeria are fueled by low perception of personal risk, multiple and concurrent sexual partnership, incest, transactional and intergenerational sex, ineffective and inefficient treatment services for sexually transmitted infections (STIS), and adequate access to and poor quality of health care services, entrenched gender inequalities, chronic and debilitating poverty and the persistence of HIV/AIDS: related stigma and discrimination are other contributing factors and reasons that forced a multitude of National and International Agencies to morally and financially contribute towards combating HIV/AIDS in Nigerian areas.³³ Furthermore, in order to strengthen the co-ordination of the Multi-Sectoral Response, the Nigerian Federal Government transformed the National Action Committee on AIDS into an Agency as the National Agency for the Control of AIDS in July,

2007, for the purpose of sustaining and improving the effectiveness and co-ordination of the National HIV response, State Governments have as well taken the same step of transforming smaller committees and bodies into agencies for the eradication and control of HIV/AIDS.³⁴

Similarly, it is worthy to note that at Nigerian state level HIV/AIDS Programmes have received a boost through the efforts of the government and the support of Development Partners which has as a result of such efforts made, led to a scale of prevention, care and treatment programmes aimed at combating such chronic disease which is the subject matter of the write-ups. Furthermore, the Monitoring and Evaluation System has been empowered and there have been increase in the number of HIV/AIDS researchers conducted.³⁵ However, it should be borne in our intellectual minds that this study rightly observed that the efforts to fight HIV depends on well-articulated Prevention Programmes addressing issues such as HIV and access to quality STI Treatment Services, provision and uptake of HIV counseling and testing, and access to care antiretroviral therapy (ART), in including prevention and treatment of opportunistic infections. In view of the above, it could be understood that the overriding concern of the study is the presentation of detailed information with regard to the crucial role played by the internal and external force of fighting HIV/AIDS. Part of the agencies include; NACA, NYSC peer endeavors, religious leaders, mass both print and broad cast, traditional leaders and at international level; there are UNICEF, UNIFEM, HRD, UK, DFID, common wealth of nations and society for family planning to mention but a few amount several of such Agencies.³⁶

However part of the major areas to locate their achievements include advocating government response to HIV, ensuring that entities responds to specific activities against HIV, organizing human and material resources, monitoring response and reports on progress in achievements, ensuring transparency and accountability by NACA in particular, as well as guiding and counseling of people living with HIV, programme, situation and analysis, in collaboration with both National and International partners to identify and mobilize resources.³⁷

The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Nigerian Society in the 21st Century an Overview:

The negative impact of the above named chronic disease on the Nigerian nation can fully be understood by looking at approximate number of the infected, prevalence increasing rate and the exact picture of some selected Nigerian states and that of Nigerian state and to a large extent sub-Saharan Africa's picture. Similarly, relevant past studies conducted indicated that about 3.3 million Nigerian may likely die in the next 10 years. The overall Nigerian Economic Development must negatively be affected or even disrupted because if closely observed currently there is always an increasing number of orphans in Nigerian area due to the increasing rate of HIV/AIDS infected people. For a better understanding of how HIV/AIDS rapidly spreads, concrete examples could be seen as follows:

Kaduna State Picture in Respect of Prevalence Increasing: Rate of HIV /AIDS Issues:

- ✓ 0.9 % ----- 1991
- ✓ 4.6 % ----- 1993
- ✓ 7.5 % ----- 1995
- ✓ 11.6 % ----- 1999
- ✓ 5.6 % ----- 2001³⁸

Recent past studies have confirmed that by the end of the year 1999 there was about 151,000 PLWAS (People Leaving With HIV/AIDS) in Kaduna state.³⁹

Nigeria's Picture HIV Sero-Prevalence Increasing:

- 1.8 % ---- 1991
- 3.8 % ---- 1993
- 4.5 % ---- 1999
- 5.8 % ---- 2001⁴⁰

In view of the above pointed facts and figures studies have shown that by the end of 2001, there was a total number of 5.6 million Nigerian Living With HIV/Virus (PLAWAS)

- 8. % of the world total of PLWAS live in Nigeria
- 10.0 % of African burden
- 8.1 % of PLWAS are in the 20-24 years age

Sub-Saharan African Picture:

- 3.8 million PLAWA by 1999
- 70 % of PLAWA live in Sub-Saharan Africa
- About 90 % reported AIDS cases are due to Hetero Sexual-Transmission
- 95 % of PLAWA live in developing countries
- 90 % of all children born to women with HIV are living in Sub-Saharan Africa⁴¹

The 21st Century HIV/AIDS Global's Picture:

- 47 Million people were found infected by HIV/AIDS in 1999

- 34.3 million PLAWA – 1999⁴²
- 5.4 million infected in 1999
- 15,000 recorded as new HIV infections daily
- 2.2 Million pregnant women, a year are of HIV positive
- 600.000 children are getting infected every year⁴³

On the whole, it should wholeheartedly and unreservedly be understood and concluded that HIV/AIDS is a development crisis, and there is a need for the world in general to join hands and fight for the progress and betterment of people's life.

A Challenge to the Nigerian Nation and Suggested Ways Forward:

However, from the foregoing examined points in respect of the danger associated with the two areas of study, i.e. Human Trafficking and HIV/AIDS, one may note that for long there have been many agencies in existence that supposed to tackle the problem of Human Trafficking but until today nothing much done to suppress it completely. Some of the major agencies fighting against this ongoing inhumane commercial transactions include; the Presidency, through Special Presidential Committee on Human Trafficking, Child Labor and Slavery, Federal Ministries of Labor and Productivity, Women Affairs and Youth Development, Justice, Information and National Orientation, Customs and Immigration, Police Commission, National Boundary Commission, UNICEF, UNIFEM, ECOWAS, World Bank USAID Embassies of Belgium, Italy, Britain, Netherlands, U.S.A and Media Organization in Nigeria.⁴⁴

Previous studies conducted recently have indicated that in the Criminal Code for the South and Panel Code for the North, the Nigerian Criminal Law contains many provisions protecting children and youth in particular from harm and sexual exploitations. In the last three decades, the Nigerian Government did not enforce these laws effectively however, since the democratic transition in 1991, the Nigerian Government and many State Houses of Assembly have passed or are in the process of passing laws to protect the Rights of Children. For example, Edo state has passed a law banning prostitution, Governors of 19 Northern Nigerian States commenced debates on promulgating laws to ban child street hawkers, child street begging and prostitution, and the Nigerian Federal Government started arresting and prosecuting all those involved in child trafficking and other forms of child abuse.⁴⁶

The last but not the least, in any case it is important to note that among the major ways forward for HIV/AIDS include HIV counseling which involves an interaction between two or more people by assisting one another to make a good decision. The goal of consultation is to provide the infected with ideas/ideas that will make them well informed. In the course of guiding and counseling an infected person these are required provision of full information, room for voluntary decision, room for better interaction, opportunity to raise questions for a better understanding and as well as opportunity to plan against the future. Similarly, the HIV counselor should be knowledgeable on what he addresses ability to offer accurate information, ability to give practical assistance by referral to appropriate and relevant Medical Centre for solution and must have good communication skills.

Other suggested ways against HIV/AIDS and sexuality related diseases involve the discouragement of sexual communication and negotiations, encouraging men to talk about sex for further knowledge, enhancement of women's capacity to determine when, where and whether or not to have sex. Men should also strive to have access to appropriate information and counseling on HIV/AIDS, homo-sexual practices must be discouraged among men, sexual violence, e.g. rape and drug addiction should be avoided. Furthermore, Governmental and Non-Governmental actions and interventions should be supported for the eradication of sexual violence on women and girls. The study also calls upon men to take adequate care of their families so that children can develop as responsive and responsible ones.

Conclusively, it is interesting to understand and be borne in our intellectual minds that these two examined areas of study i.e. Human Trafficking and HIV/AIDS have contributed in depopulating Nigeria's population, thereby resulting in the creation of many economic, political, social and cultural development crises. The study draws into light for both the Nigerian state, people and society to note that the challenges confronting our immediate society are many, among others include; depopulation, immigration, unnatural death on massive scale as a result of high rate of HIV/AIDS, failure of the government to rise to the responsibility i.e. weak administrative policies being implemented, scanty funding. Therefore, it is of significance and relevance to note that creation of full-scale employment opportunities for the Nigerian youths against joblessness is one of the ways forward.

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