A Biblical Approach to the Reduction of Child Trafficking in Ado- Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research work examined a biblical approach to the reduction of child trafficking in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. Child trafficking is one of the dangerous monsters in Ekiti State that required urgent attention. The number of victims are progressively increasing every day because of lack of security, socio-political and economic illness that saturated the state and the nation Nigeria at large. Thus, despite the laudable efforts of the immediate pass and current government and that of the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICF) to put this act into minimal rate in Ekiti, yet, it seems that this hydra headed monster habit is rapidly gaining appreciative ground in the society. Using critique method of data collections, the findings revealed that lack of adequate nutrition (shelter), health illness, economic recess, war, invasion of terrorist, wickedness and many others resulted to child trafficking. This research concluded that to complement the efforts of government, security agents and that of the UNICEF, biblical policies must be implemented. This research therefore recommended that enforcement of biblical principles about child rights would help to reduce this habit into minimal level in the society.

Keywords: Biblical Approach, Reduction, Child Trafficking, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria

Introduction

Human trafficking refers to illegal movement of people from one place to another or from one country to another, usually for nefarious activities such as sexual exploitation or prostitution, forced labour and other unwholesome activities Fadeiye (2005), Human trafficking is still persistent because it makes exorbitant amount of money for the traffickers and they use money to bribe their way through. However, child trafficking is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of an individual by means of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion for the purpose of exploitation. It is a violation of their rights, their well-being and denies them the opportunity to reach their full potential. According to Anker (2006), at least 1.2 million children are trafficked annually for child labour and sexual exploitation. While recent research has yielded information on the nature of child trafficking, little is known about its magnitude. To reduce vulnerabilities that make children susceptible to trafficking and child labour, Global March (GM) assists governments in strengthening laws, policies and services including legislative review and reforms, establishing minimum labour standards, and supporting access to education. Global March also works with communities to change norms and practices that exacerbate children’s vulnerabilities to trafficking and entering into child labour right from its source- in the villages at the grass root level. However, Roughly [160 million children](https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/child-labour-rises-160-million-first-increase-two-decades) were subjected to child labour at the beginning of 2020, with [9 million additional children](https://data.unicef.org/resources/child-labour-2020-global-estimates-trends-and-the-road-forward) at risk due to the impact of COVID-19. This accounts for nearly 1 in 10 children worldwide. Almost half of them are in hazardous work that directly endangers their health and development. Children may be driven into work for various reasons, most often; child labour occurs when families face financial challenges or uncertainty – whether due to poverty, sudden illness of a caregiver, or job loss of a primary wage earner (Anker, 2006). The consequences are staggering. Child labour can result in extreme bodily and mental harm, and even death. It can leads to slavery and sexual or economic exploitation. Nearly every case, it cuts children off from schooling and health care, restricting their fundamental rights.

Cigno and Rosati (2006), asserted that, children that are victims of child labour cannot develop their skills, because they are unskilled, they cannot contribute meaningfully to the growth of their nation’s gross domestic product ( GDP), hence, they are affected negatively and so also their society. The situation of child labour and trafficking in Ado Local Government is not different from what obtains in other local governments across the country. A large number of Ado local government children are engaged in some form of child labour and eventually trafficking out of their homes. These children participated in mild to worst forms of child labour. Others, especially ladies who were forced to engage in commercial sex, where the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STD) or (HIV) and unwanted teenagers’ pregnancy occurred.

Etymology and Causes of Human Trafficking

From time immemorial, human trafficking has been in operation all over the world. Among the traditional African society, slavery was practiced, the peonage or pawnship that is; *Iwofa* in Yoruba Language also symbolizes slavery system (Anker, 2006). The Arabian people who traded from West Africa through the trans-share trade routes were the first set of people to export slaves from West Africa to North Africa. When the Europeans discovered the new world (America) and saw that the land of America and West Indies was suitable for the cultivation of cotton, coffee, Tobacco, Sugar etc. They came to West Africa particularly for slavery. These flourished throughout 16th, 17th, 18th and early 19th Centuries. Anker revealed that slavery as a trade had been abolished in the world; but a new device of trafficking people had emerged. Today, men, women and children are affected as they are illegally taken out of their different communities to other parts of the world for obscure businesses or jobs. Nigerians today are not left out; children are particularly transported illegally to other parts of the world especially European and Asia countries where they became prostitutes and engaged them in odd and hard labour.

Okpukpara and Odurukwe (2006), noted that many reasons were responsible for child labour and trafficking these were; lust for world riches and materials, that is, the syndrome to get-rich quick is a very important factor, ignorance on the part of the parents to facilitate child labour and trafficking. Many parents are ignorant of the evil intention of the traffickers towards their children, believing that they would be gainfully employed in overseas countries and bring them money to abject poverty among the parents of the children who were been treated as commodities for trafficking. Many of them are willing to give their children and wards to the human traffickers, so that such children and wards will bring them hard currencies, such as pound sterling and dollar. Unconducive Nigeria environment where conspicuous poverty had taken effective control of most Nigerians encourage people to move out of the country illegally. It is a pity that many Nigerians are currently suffering in the midst of plenty due to bad leadership that doesn’t care about the future of children and who only engage in looting, and lack visions.

Thus, the impatience on the part of our young children who wanted to amass materials at any cost , such children can easily deceived and lured by human traffickers. Gross unemployment is another major factor that encourages human trafficking. For lack of securing employment, many young girls/boys are lured by human traffickers being promised of securing employment in overseas countries, the jobs that never existed especially in ltaly where they are compelled to engage in prostitution and hard labour. Scholars and policy makers submitted that, the effect of child labour and trafficking generated negative impact with grave social consequences on the child, his family and the society at large. Baland and Robimson (2000), opined that, a nation with high prevalence of child labour and trafficking cannot be productive today and in the future. This is because the future of the society can only be prepared for future challenges through education.

Historical Background of Ado-Ekiti

Ado-Ekiti is an ancient city, founded in the year 1310A.D by Ewi Awamaro the son of Biritikolu after the defeat of Elesun of Ilesun settlement. Ewi was not only a king; he was also the supreme military Chief of his army. Awamaro (the restless one) and ‎Ewi‎ (the speaker)‎ was said to have left Ile-Ife with his father Ewi Apa Biritikolu and his uncle Oranmiyan to both Ita Orogun and Benin respectively after staying briefly with Oloba in Oba-Ile, Akure. Both Oranmiyan (Oba of Benin) and Biritikolu first settled in Benin forests before disputes among their people led them to separate and Biritikolu sought a new home westward at Utamodi (Oke Papa). Ewi Biritikolu and one of his sons reigned there. It was Ewi Awamaro who migrated to Ilesun (Present day Ado-Ekiti) after staying briefly at Udoani (Ido Ani) and Agbado during the long migration. When Ewi Awamaro left Agbado, some elders remained behind to rest and gave the settlement the name Agba Ado (Elders’ Camp) – Agbado-Ekiti as the town is known today. Ulesun people welcomed them warmly and neighbouring committees came together to assist their settlement (built homesteads for them) at Oke-Ibon in Odo Ijigbo. Eventually, Ewi and his people overthrew the existing political arrangements, conquered Ulesun community, displaced its ruler Elesun and established a new town. Awamaro’s spies encouraged him to attack Elesun with the support of Odolofin after he had settled down at Oke Ibon (now Odo Ijigbo) and with the conquest of Ulesun by Awamaro, the town of Ulesun changed its name to Ado or Ado-Ewi. The Elesun (the King) who ruled over the town of Ulesun with its satellite towns i.e. Ukere (now Ikere), Isinla, Ulamoji, Agidimo, Ikewo existed in what is now known as Ado-Ekiti before the emergence of Ewi of Ado-Ekiti. The Elesun occupied the peak of a hierarchy where he had his subordinates as the Odolofin (Elesun second in command), Asao, Elegemo, Alamoji, Olisinla, Olulero, Olookori etc. Elesun was the head of the laity in the worship of Olota (god), the deity in charge of the security of Ulesun State. The Ulesun language was different from Yoruba (Ado-Ewi) language. Examples are Ideregbe (Ewure or Goat), Okeregba (Aja or Dog), Amomo (Alangba or Lizard), Usa (Ikoko or Pot), Ukere (Ago or Calabash Cup), Ogolomosi (Ibepe or Pawpaw), Oyeye (Epa or Groundnut). Some of the Elesun’s chiefs such as Odolofin and Asao were accepted into the Ewi’s system of chieftaincy after Awamaro’s conquest. The Elegemo retained his post as Chief Priest and custodian of Iwemo Ogun. Ewi’s Warrior chiefs who provided military security for palace inhabitants were the Akogun at Irona, Oloja Ese at Oke Ese, Eleyinmi at Okeyinmi and Egbedi at Orereowu.‎ Eventually, Ewi and his people overthrew the existing political arrangements after series of conflicts, conquered Ulesun community, displaced and killed its ruler Elesun, cut off his head, proceeded and established a new town, Awamaro named Ado, meaning ‘here we encamp’. Ewi Awamaro and his successors conquered villages and cottages in the neighbourhood, replaced their rulers with their own loyalists, stalwarts and scions of the royal family. The important citizens of these conquered communities were relocated in Ado. Ewi supplanted Elesun as sovereign ruler of the aboriginal and settler population, many of Elesun’s Chiefs were confirmed in their offices but they swore oaths of allegiance to the Ewi (Olootu, 2017). Many of the succeeding Ewi expanded the kingdom by force of arms, annexed territories and gave these territories to scions of the royal families, these assumed titles which became hereditary. The expansion and growth of Ado-Ekiti and the kingdom of Ado lasted over 400 years. In the course of this expansion, Ado became associated with certain traits Citizens of the kingdom in general and those of the mother town, Ado-Ekiti in particular were reputed for great attention to cleanliness. Traditions preserve numerous brave citizens of each Ado community, the best known were Ogbigbonihanran of Idolofin quarters, Ogunmonakan of Okelaja, Fasawo, a.k.a. Aduloju of Udemo quarters, and Eleyinmi Orogirigbona of Okeyinmi quarters – all of Ado-Ekiti and Ogunbulu, a.k.a. Ala l’oju Osoru of Aisegba. ‎Folk, traditions are replete with fond references to Ewi’s relationship with some other Ekiti traditional rulers. Ewi’s antecedents are depicted as: Elempe Ekiti (mightiest man in Ekiti).‎ Folk traditions of this nature vividly portray the towering position of Ado-Ekiti. In the first place, Ado-Ekiti is situated at the heartland of Ekiti and is thus less exposed to cross-border attacks or non-Ekiti influences. Consequently, over many centuries, waves of immigrant groups seeking haven settled in Ado-Ekiti and several other Ado communities‎. Many of these immigrants were refugees**;** they left their old homelands in parts of Ekiti, Akoko, Owo etc. where their leaders lost out in chieftaincy contests. Some were war captives; these were brought in droves by Aduloju and his lieutenants from their slave wars of the 1870s and 1880s in parts of Owo, Ose and Akoko. They were settled in Ado communities where they increased the local population, and enriched the culture with their lineage names and festivals in similar circumstances, citizens of Ado communities left their fatherland and settled in a few places in the neighbourhood up to Ijesaland. Ibadan sacked many Ado communities in 1873 and made a huge haul of prisoners of war and other captives who eventually settled in Iwo, Ibadan and some Remo towns such as Iperu and Makun Sagamu. However, Ado communities especially the mother town offset part of their losses with a large number of slaves and prisoners of war from Owo, Ose and Akoko. Ado-Ekiti is one of the towns of the north eastern territory of Yoruba land and passed through a succession of military, political and cultural changes from the time of ‎Ewi Awamaro (circa 1310 A.D) who migrated there to form what became Ado-Ekiti. Ewi Awamaro subjugated Elesun’s neighbours and expanded his territory except Ukere (Ikere Ekiti) and his successors up to Yeyenirewu followed same steps that by 1550 A.D. Ado-Ewi had become a big power in the entire Ekiti country. The Ewis that reigned at Ado from 1444 to 1552 were:

1. Ewi Ata (1444–1471)

2. Ewi Owakunrugbon (1471–1490)

3. Ewi Owamuaran (1490–1511)

4. Yeyenirewu – The regent (1511– 1552)‎ Ewi’s military exploits during the period was to subjugate and annex his immediate territories extended to Ikere, Igbara Odo, Ogotun, Aramoko, Erio and Erijiyan among others.

5. Ewi Obakunrin (1552–1574)

6. Ewi Eleyo-Okun (1574–1599) ‎

7. Ewi Afigbogbo Ara Soyi (1599-1630)

8. Ewi Gberubioya (1630-1696)

9. Ewi Idagunmodo (1696-1710)

10. Ewi Okinbaloye Aritawekun (1710-1722)

11. ‎Ewi Amono Ola (1722-1762)

12. ‎Ewi Afunbiowo (1762-1781)‎

13. Ewi Akulojuorun (1781-1808)‎

14. Ewi Aroloye (1808-1836)‎

15. Ewi Ali Atewogboye (1836-1885)‎

16. Ewi Ajimudaoro Aladesanmi I (1886-1910)‎

#### 17. Ewi Adewumi Agunsoye (1910 – 1936)‎

#### 18. Ewi Daniel Anirare Aladesanmi II (1937 – 1983),

#### 19. Ewi Samuel Adeyemi George-Adelabu I (1984 – 1988)

#### 20. Alayeluwa Ewi Rufus Adeyemo Adejugbe Aladesanmi III (the current Ewi of Ado-Ekiti). ‎

#### Ado-Ewi was peaceful as war was abandoned in place of diplomacy and mutual relations strategy. Ewi Gberubioya divided the Ewi dynasty into three ruling houses of Owaroloye (Aroloye), Atewogboye and Arutawekun. Ewi’s sons that ruled in neighbouring areas during the reign of Gberubioya included Okunbusi who became Onigede, Adubienimu who became Alawo, the Onijan, Opoakin (of Iwere), Olu Akitipa (of Odo), Aramude, Olokun, Olurasa, Onikewo and Olotin. One of his sons, Amujoye founded Igbemo and took the title of Oba of Igbemo from its inception thus; Ado-Ekiti is the state capital of Ekiti State.

#### Biblical Approach to Child Labour and Child Trafficking

Many falsely believed that human trafficking and child labour are modern –day problem, this issue has been in existence since biblical time. The narrative of human trafficking began with the story of Joseph in the Old Testament, when his brothers sold him into slavery (Genesis 39:28).  This narrative continued on a national scale in Exodus when the Egyptians enslaved the Israelites for over 400 years. This history of trafficking continued throughout Biblical History and grew in regularity as cultures developed and nations formed. The expansion of the world’s population allowed the trafficking of people to impact every country on this planet negatively. Slavery, which irreparably marred American history, enslaved and oppressed an entire ethnicity based on skin color, helped propel trafficking onto the global stage. Since that time, the exploitation, abuse, and victimization of people have grown exponentially (Rachel and Chris, 2020). The proliferation of modern-day slavery and sexual exploitation of people is not just a social justice issue for government, NGOs, but an affront to the bible and should be on the mind and heart of every Christians. Having ears opened to the cries of the oppressed and rescuing those enslaved is a central theme throughout Biblical history. When the prophet Isaiah uttered the words in Isaiah 61:1-2, he was expressing the very heart of God.

“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me, for the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the Lord’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies.”

Throughout the Scriptures one could see that God hears the cries of the oppressed, He remembers the covenant with His people, and He acts to rescue and deliver. He does not overlook or turn a blind eye to the oppressed; instead, He makes them the central focus of His love, provides justice and rescue for the hopeless. His commitment to redemption is so significant that He sends His own Son, Jesus, whose name means “The Lord Saves/Rescues.” Jesus, God incarnate, is repeatedly moved with compassion upon seeing and hearing the cries of those oppressed and enslaved through the curse and acts to redeem His people and provide eternal justice.

Ways of Eradicating Child Labour and Child Trafficking through Biblical Guidance and Counselling

Recent reports gave clear submission that the rate of child trafficking in Ado-Ekiti has increased rapidly and gained appreciative ground despite the efforts of formal and present government to strictly curb this hydra headed monster. Since child labour and trafficking is seen as detrimental to the child, his or her family and the society at large, several suggestions have been made to eradicate and manage it. This is done mostly through the introduction of biblical counselling services. Engerman (2001) argued that, the strategies for controlling child labour and child trafficking in societies included counselling services that excluded children education from participating in hazardous work, limit on the number of hour a child help his or her parents doing petty homework such as; cleaning, the environment, Washing plates to allow such a child going to school on times and read his/her book and attend to assignment without being disturbed. There must be introduction of minimum education attainments of working children, and other counselling services that promote economic growth. (Okpukpara and Odurujwe, 2006) submitted that, child labour and trafficking could be controlled through guidance and counselling services that involve implementation of effective polices that take account of variables like age, income statues of child labourers, households, education level of parents as well as sector and zone.

Implementation of innovation policies and programme that are designed to eradicate or minimize child labour and trafficking by the government should be established. Government should partner with various agencies such as Guidance agent, pastoral counselor, immigration, custom, police, etc. Ekiti State Government should be more strict with proscription of child labour and child trafficking in its entire forms through the enactment of child’s right law in 2008.

Declaration of free and compulsory primary and secondary schools education in Ado- Ekiti Local Government, increase funding and rehabilitation of schools public education through the use of counselling and media services. Persistence orientation to the parents from engaging their children in child labour and child trafficking and parents that involve in such act should be prosecuted in the court of law. Thus, biblical policies against human trafficking and slavery should not be underrated rather, it must be practiced.

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