

Dialectics of the Incubation of 'Baby Factories' in Nigeria

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Abstract

The developing world is facing a lot of crises. Globalization is not also helping the countries of the global South as it was thought and to the extent that it was believed. Currently, extreme poverty and other vagaries of underdevelopment are compelling the so-called developing countries to resort to all kinds of survival antics that are practically against the cultural norms and values of the people. Baby factory: the production and the selling of children like food stuffs is a phenomenon that developing countries such as Nigeria are struggling with. This study adopted survey research methodology to investigate the phenomenon of Baby factories in Nigeria. For the Baby factory practice to be reduced drastically and immediately the study recommended among others that general and massive economic empowerment, of all varieties, for the youths is the first action needed. This is because abject poverty is one of the main driving forces behind the ugly un-African phenomenon in focus.

Key words— Dialectics, Incubation, Baby, Factories, and Nigeria

Introduction

The Hague Convention on Adoption; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; the United Nations Children's Fund; the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children; Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, Supporting the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, commonly referred to as :African Children's Charter; the Day of the African Child; African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women; are all treaties, conventions, platforms and protocols that have been developed and established by child-rights activists and pro-children minded individuals in the international arena among others to protect the abuse, sale and criminal inter-country adoption of minors.

Virtually all individual countries have also created agencies and even full-fledge government ministries to safeguard children from predators such as pedophiles, traffickers and drug barons. For instances, in Nigeria, the federal government has creations (the federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, and the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) among others; it is sponsoring and bankrolling yearly with significant amount of cash to look after the millions of poor and vulnerable children scattered around the nation. Despite all the measures that appear to be very formidable and even proactive, the abuse of innocent children in all phases by state and non-state actors has become a characteristic of the *developed*, *developing* and *semi-developed* nations such as Nigeria, Ethiopia, Gabon, Angola, Benin Republic, Namibia, India, Guatemala, China, Indonesia, United Kingdom, United States of America, and others (Haruhiko, 2008, Minkang, 2008, and William, 2008)



The unsavory but now very common practice of producing babies to sell to the highest bidders in Nigeria commonly referred to as, *baby factory*, is an issue among others that have called into question the viability and the competencies of the various protocols, conventions, child-centered agencies and their managers. The *Baby factory* phenomenon in Nigeria is now moving into the realm of pandemic and it is time for all and sundry to roll-up their sleeves to curb this socio-economic and political systemic and systematic rot that has exposed the underbelly of our casino capitalist system of government and governance. Therefore, the main focus of this study is to explore, mostly the economic factors, that have triggered the phenomenon and to find possible strategies that will help to reduce the evil practices to a bearable minimum.

The Statement of the Problem

The current and rampant production of babies for purely commercial purposes in different guise as become a bane in the Nigerian society to a level that harsh and instantaneous extra-judicial penalties such as destruction of the properties like houses of the merchants of the baby factories has been formulated and implemented by some state governments. The baby factory phenomenon has also started to be a focus for scholars' interrogations. Therefore, the core interest of this study is to unmask the basic economic-oriented factors that are triggering the now rampant baby factory syndrome in the country. In addition, possible solutions to the syndrome will be unearthed in this regard.

Methodology

Because of the peculiar nature of the study and the characteristics of the target population (security personnel, repentant baby factory syndicates, practitioners of motherless baby homes, heads of the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, top NAPTIP staffers, women academics and economists); mixed research method was adopted and the target respondents were purposively selected. The mixed method was appropriate because the issue under interrogation is multi-dimensional and it needs field work that is guided by the principles of quantitative and quantitative field survey research designs to expose the core foci of the study. In consonant with the research design, well-structured interview guide with all relevant questions was prepared to elucidate the needed information from the well-informed targeted stakeholders. Some of the information was also solicited through the conversational interview method from the target population.

Conceptual Exposition of the Study

Theoretical Framework

Political scientists like other disciplines' theorists and even practitioners have approaches, orientations and platforms that they use to scrutiny and elucidate societal issues. In most cases these approaches, orientations and platforms are in most times called theories. Theories are collections of statements that propose casual explanations of phenomena (Moore, 2001:2). A political theory therefore, is an explanatory proposition, an idea or set of ideas, that in some way seeks to impose order or meaning upon occurrence (Heywood, 2004: 10). Robert Dahl (1963), *Modern Political Analysis*; David Easton (1965), *A Framework for Political Analysis*; Carl Friedrich (1967), *An Introduction to Political Theory* and modern political theorists such as



Heywood Andrew (2004), *Political Theory*, have done considerable work on the political theories to vis-à-vis explain and analyze issues in the society. General System Theory, Structural Functional Analysis, Group Theory, Political Elite Theory, Communication Theory, Marxist/Leninist theory and Political Economy Theory are some of the approaches and platforms that have been developed to dissect and explain issues.

In the academic literature major texts which highlight the significance of politics to development outcomes include: R. Bates (2001), *Prosperity and Violence: The Political-Economy of Development*; P. Collier (2007), *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What Can be Done About It*; W. Easterly (2006), *The White Man's Burden*; H. Kitschelt and S. Wilkinson (2007), *Patrons, Clients and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*; D. North et al (2007) *Limited Access Orders in the Developing World: A New Approach to the Problems of Development*. In the NGO world, literature such as: *Our Common Interest: The Report of the Africa Commission*, 2005; Cabinet Office, *Investing in Prevention: An International Strategy to Manage Risks of Instability and Improve Crisis Response*, 2005; DFID, *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Governance Work for the Poor*, White Paper on International Development, 2006; DFID, *Governance, Development and Democratic Politics: DFID's Work in Building More Effective States*, 2007; IDB, *Policy-making in Latin America: How Politics Shapes Policies*, 2008, have succinctly highlighted the political economy angle of societal issues analyses.

The political economy theory is the foundation of the baby factory issue under interrogation because the issues at stake have fundamental relationships with the intricacies of this theory. Political economy theory of analysis according to the Department of International Development (DFID) Paper of 2009 is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time. However, according to *Olaniyi*, (2001:100-2) in his book, *Introduction to Contemporary Political Analysis*, in the developing countries like Nigeria, Marxist-oriented scholars are the ones that have developed the penchant of using this approach to analysis/explain issues of state. Claude Aka is one of the main exponents of this approach of political analysis in Africa. His book, *A Political Economy of Africa*, is a classic of this approach.

To the exponents of this approach, if the knowledge of the economic condition of a state is known, the general characters of the social, political, cultural, educational, religious, etc systems can be reasonably analysed and known. Political economy approach gives a very high regard to material conditions of the citizenry of a nation, particularly the satisfaction of the economic dynamics such as the basic needs of life in the explanation of social-political and cultural life. This explains why Ake, (1981) declared that: "it is true that man does not live by bread alone. But it is a more fundamental truth that man cannot live without bread". The baby factory epidemic in Nigeria is a result of the dysfunctional economic and political policies of the ruling elites that have so impoverished the lower classes in the nation to a degree that simple African traditions and customs such as the love and protection of new born babies have been jettisoned and sacrificed on the altars of basic survival and profiteering instincts and antics.



Baby factory

The abuse of children in different forms is as old as human history. It is also a global phenomenon that has attracted sundry categories of attentions that have pushed for severe penalties for the abusers. The fight to protect children from predators internationally pre-dated the League of Nations, the precursor of the current United Nations. According to the Legislative History of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Volume One:

Attempts to set minimum standards for the protection of children pre-date the League of Nations by more than a decade. In the late nineteenth century, NGOs had started to combat the white-slave traffic, and by 1902 their efforts were carried forward by an international conference which led to the adoption of two international conventions in 1905 and 1910 respectively. Other efforts focused on children employed in factories and mines, and in 1890 the first Conference on Workers' Protection in Berlin recommended a minimum age of 14 years for miners. Both issues were addressed in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which obliged its members to "endeavour to secure and maintain fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children" (art. 23 (a)) and to "entrust the League with the general supervision over the execution of agreements with regard to the traffic in women and children (UN: Legislative History of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Vol One, 2007:3)

The first globally explicit convention against the abuse of the child was the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, also known as the Geneva Declaration adopted by the League of Nations (UN: Legislative History of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Vol One, 2007:4).

In Africa, the precursor of the African Union (AU), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted the first declaration of the Rights and Welfare of the Child about four decades ago; the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) that was unanimously adopted in 1990 by the AU is the guardian angel of the African Child in all ramifications (Sloth-Nielson, 2008:4). The ACRWC has had a trickle down effects in all nations of the continent. Individual nations tailored their child protection mechanisms of all sorts according to the dictates, the spirit and the letters of the ACRWC. This explains why all African nations can boast of three or more agencies, ministries and provisions in their constitutions that are directly related to the child in all segments. For instance, in Nigeria, the Child Rights Act of 2003 mandates parents, guardians, institutions and authorities in whose care children are placed, to provide the necessary guidance, education and training to enable the children to become responsible citizens of the nation (Taiwo, 2013:5), this provision is highly swayed by the philosophies of the ACRWC.

Despite all the mechanisms that have been developed in the continent to advance the children's well being, the current state of children is still very far from normal. In fact the abuse of children has nosedive to a dimension that some of the children are now specifically produce to be sold like toiletries in the open market with reckless abandon in Nigeria and other so-called developing countries. This has propelled significant number of stakeholders to protest against medium such as inter-country adoption schemes and other forms of polished child trafficking mechanisms like private foster homes that enhance circuitously the production and the selling of babies in most developing countries (Smolin, 2007:14, Onyemelukwe-Onuobia, 2013:1). Currently the Baby factory phenomenon is not peculiar to Nigeria. The Washington Times in



2009 published in an article entitled: *Nigerian bust another baby factory, saves 6 pregnant teens*, that the Talibans in Afghanistan buys children to be trained as suicide bombers too. In China, Guatemala, Myanmar, Vietnam, and other Asian countries baby factories are issues that the respective governments are seriously contending with (The UK Guardian, 2007). In African countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Namibia, Benin, and Gabon, children are basically trafficked and produced (harvest) for the largely crime-laden international inter-country adoption system for consumers in Europe and America (Geoghegan 2005:1, Baffuor, 2003 and Smolin, 2007:14).

Smolin (2007:12) revealed that, child laundering, which involve obtaining children illicitly through force, fraud, or financial inducement through medium such as orphanages for adoption in first world nations has been bedeviled by scandals that brought to the fore the greed of all participants—both the producers and the consumers. Globally, child trafficking is a huge business, yearly about \$33 billion fall out of this crime to the pockets of those who muster the courage to indulge in it according to the United Nations (Vanguard, July 30th, 2011). As at 2005, the trafficking of human-beings only generated approximately \$10 billion per year (UNICEF, 2005:7). Unquestionably, to Ebbe and Dilip (2008:7) in their work, *Global trafficking of women and Children*, the illegal trafficking in women and children for purposes of slave labour, child labour, pornography, and forced prostitution has become a modern day social problem. Ebbe (2008:20-28) in another work, entitled, *The Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Women and Children*, imputed that all nations of the world are unswervingly or circuitously involve in the trafficking of women and children. A UNICEF (2005:7) publication, *Combating Child Trafficking: A Handbook for Parliamentarians* confirmed the above assertion thus: *Trafficking of children links all countries and regions in a web of international crime. Every year, children are smuggled across borders and sold like commodities. Others are trafficked within their home countries, usually from rural to urban areas.*

Reports by the European Union and the United Nations divulged that child trafficking is the third biggest crime in Nigeria after financial fraud and drug trafficking (Yvonne, 2013:1 and Vanguard, July 30, 2011). According to the United Nations report cited in a BBC News of 01 June, 2011: *Nigeria “baby farm” girls rescued by Abia state police*, at least 10 children are sold in Nigeria every day across the country. Some of the root causes that are sustaining the baby factory phenomenon in Nigeria are: the importance placed on one’s own biological children, the authorities’ incapability to police foster homes, failure to use our criminal laws efficiently, and the deficiency of ample policies and legislations (Onyemelukwe-Onuobia, 2013:1 and Vittoria, 2012:2). While the above summation of the root causes of the active development of baby factories in the countries currently may not be out of place, particularly, the premium placed on one’s own biological children, the woman’s crowning glory, according to Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*; the rampant poverty fostered by extreme unemployment among the youths, in a country that is producing more than two million barrels of commercial worth of crude oil every twenty four hours for the international market, appears to be the foremost foundational cause of the repulsive phenomenon.

The Nigerian and the international media now daily publish stories of the discovery of baby factories in the country (al-Jazeera, Dec 20th 2013; PM News, 20th Dec, 2013; CBS News June 2, 2011, 3: 53 AM; The Times of India, AFP Dec 20, 2013, 06.52PM; Vanguard, on October 30, 2013; TVC News, 24th Dec, 2013; Punch, September 9, 2013, The Telegraph



6:04PM BST 01 Jun 2011ph; Online Nigerian News, 22/08/2012 08:56:00; BBC News, 25 September 2012; BBC News, 01 June, 2011; and ABC news, 03 May, 2013.) Below is an excerpt of one of the stories in a widely read Nigerian news tabloid, The Vanguard of July 30th, 2011, the news item was aptly entitled: *How Child Trafficking Network Operates in South-East*, and it summarizes the intricacies in material details of the whole disturbing baby factory phenomenon:

...In Nigeria, the traffickers are seldom caught, and even when they are, they easily buy their way out. It is rampant in Nigeria but prevalent in the Eastern part of the country.... In Surulere Lagos, a childless Yoruba lady, married for five years, facing family discomforts was told by her lady friend of a baby factory in Aba, Abia state... the babies are sold for N150, 000 and N200, 000 per baby. Twins sell for N450,000. ...The boys who impregnate the girls are paid N10,000 to N20,000. ...The police said the babies were sold and their mothers discharged after being paid N25, 000 or N30, 000 depending on the sex of the baby...Last year alone, more than six of such illegal homes were sealed and more than 100 such victims rescued in Aba. Some pastors are involved too... Vanguard, July 30th, 2011:21-22).

The production and the selling of babies in the country has reached a level where it has pushed the government of some states to resort to extra-judicial methods such as the demolishing of houses and the destruction of other properties of those who are involve in the business (Okey, 2013). Other forms of capital punishments and life imprisonment for offenders also have been considered as appropriate measures to curb the menace (Orient Daily December 23, 2013).

Findings

- a) Abject poverty is the primary motivation that is propelling the producers of the babies in the baby factories to give out their babies for money. Almost all the producers of the babies are from very poor homes and they are indigenes of mostly very remote communities that came to the cities and towns to source for the basics of life;
- b) Most of the producers of the babies in the baby factories are educationally challenged. A good number of them did not complete their secondary school education;
- c) Some of the producers of the babies are girls or women who have failed in their petty businesses and who needed money to re-start another businesses; about half of the babies producers needed money to start a vocation or to complete secondary school education;
- d) Greed is the main motivating factors that moved the owners of the baby factories to start their heinous trade;
- e) Very few people purchase babies in baby factories in Nigeria for rituals; some of the buyers of the babies re-sell them for profit to mostly people living in the Diaspora; most of the buyers of the babies are women who are barren and have issues in their marriage;
- f) The buying of babies in baby factories in Nigeria is ethnic and religious blind, however, it appears women living in the cities of the South-South region, Abuja and Lagos are the major consumers of the numerous products of the baby factories situated in the South-Eastern part of the country.



Recommendations

- a) General and massive economic empowerments, such as compulsory vocational training with financial supports, for the youths who are not privileged is the first action needed to reduce this phenomenon. The biting poverty in the land is making a lot of the youths to become desperate;
- b) Professionals (like medical doctors and nurses) who are out of job because they were guilty of one crime or the other should not be allowed to starve, they should be provided or allowed to do some other decent jobs to take care of themselves. And this group of people should also be monitored.
- c) The authorities (local, state and the federal government) should make the child adoption system and processes in the country to be very flexible and easy; and
- d) Couples who are finding it very difficult to procreate should be supported by the authorities to seek advanced medical care in and outside the country.
- e) The security agencies and other authorities who are mandated to fight the misdemeanor of baby factory should be strengthened in all ways to carry out their duties.

Conclusion

The baby factory phenomenon, the production and the selling of new born babies like every other commodity in Nigeria is not only embarrassing to the country, and the black race, it is a crime against humanity. The sad and very unfortunate dimension is that like most trans-boarder crimes such as drug trafficking, arms trafficking and prostitution, baby factories are becoming very common in Africa's most populace country, which invariably mean that soon it will be an African phenomenon. This is basically because all the efforts of the stakeholders to fight the crime are amounting to nothing. And this call for a serious re-evaluation of the phenomenon that will translate to the crafting of new strategies, therefore, the recommendations of this study, we believe, will go a long way to help the situation and will set the ball of the re-analysis of the phenomenon rolling.

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