
Role of Igbo Language as Indices in Curbing Modern Day Slavery

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Abstract

Slavery has existed in many countries of the world, and it continues to cause a lot of untold hardships to its victims. Modern day slavery manifests through forced labour, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, neocolonialism etc. These widespread problems across Igbo land and globe are still in existence despite Government efforts to curb it through the 1999 Constitution at article 34.1(b) which declares that no person shall be held in slavery and in the criminal code Act which criminalizes slavery dealing under section 369. Also National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Legislation providing for the rights and protection of children in Nigeria- Child Right Act (2003), the ugly situation has been on the increase. This paper therefore, sees the use of Igbo language as a tool to curb modern day slavery in Igbo land through various agencies like the family, school and church via mass media, folktales etc. The paper further looks into the negative effects and consequences of modern day slavery in the society. The study adopts qualitative research design because it identifies and structurally analysed the use of Igbo language in curbing modern day slavery in Igbo land. The method of data collection include: primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include: introspection i.e. the researcher's intuitive knowledge of Igbo language and culture, oral interview and observation technique while the secondary sources include: data from relevant books, journals, and internet materials. Finally, the paper gives some recommendations that can help check and contain slavery in this modern time.

Key words: *Igbo language, curbing, Modern day slavery, sexual exploitation and human trafficking.*

Introduction

Language is very important in every aspect of human endeavor. In other words, one can hardly make a meaningful impact in the society without making use of language. Language, in the recent times, has helped address some national problems. To buttress more on the importance of language, Ker (2007) identifies key action words that depict language function such as: ‘informs’, ‘amuses’, ‘convinces’, ‘warns’, ‘praises’, educate the public or inform the society of the recent happenings around them. For Egbokare (2004) language permeates all aspects of human life endeavor. The author further states that, the function of a language is closely tied to the fortune of the people who speak it. This means that through language, every potential an individual has is made manifest. For instance English language today avail the speakers popularity, regard and global respect all over the world.

Prezi, Ikekeonwu, Agbedo and Mbah (2013) say that language can only perform its function among the members of the community speaking it when there is understanding of language structures among the language users. It is in view of this that Ejele (2003) observed that, it is not only important for a speaker to know the meanings of words and how to combine them to form larger strings, but it is equally important that the speaker is able to interpret the meaning of utterances in the particular context in which they are expressed. This means that a competent language user does not only know the meaning of words and how to combine them to form complex strings but should also interpret the meaning of any utterances made.

The term slavery can be defined as the condition of control either absolute or near absolute by one person(s), group or network over another person(s) or group that is not in the interest of the controlled (Okafor, 2014). The General Assembly of the United Nations Organization (UNO) in 1948 adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Right Article 4 proclaims that “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude, slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms”. According to Okafor (2014) the UN Supplementary Convention 1956 offers a definition of servile status and “slavery-like practices”, such as debt bondage, serfdom, unfree marriage and the exploitation of young people. The classical definition of slave trade only recognized practices that involved trade in captured person(s) which involves engagement in the business of capturing, buying and selling of human being as slave workers. According to Okafor (2014) modern day slavery involves all acts concerned in the capture, purchase, or sale of a slave with intent to reduce the person to a slave or all acts involved in the acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchange the person and in general, every act of trade or transport in slaves.

Slavery has existed in many countries of the world, and it continues to cause a lot of untold hardships to its victims. Modern day slavery manifests through forced labour, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, neocolonialism etc. The United Nation Centre for Human Right summarizes that, the word slavery today covers a variety of human rights violations. In addition to traditional slavery and the slave trade, these abuses include: the sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography, the exploitation of child labour, the sexual mutilation of female children, the use of children in armed conflict, debt bondage, the traffic in persons and in the sale of human organs, the exploitation of prostitution and certain practices under apartheid and colonial regime. These abuses are widespread across Igbo land and are still in existence despite Nigerian government efforts to curb it through the 1999 Constitution article 34.1(b) which declares that no person shall be held in slavery and in the criminal code Act which criminalizes slavery dealing under section 369. Also National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), Legislation providing for the rights and

protection of children in Nigeria- Child Right Act (2003), the ugly situation has been on the increase.

Problem of the study

The nature of functional weakness of the social, political and economic institutions in Nigeria do not only deepen underdevelopment but also attract and provide safe haven for various unscrupulous economic operators. These weaknesses enhance the establishment and operations of local and cross-border criminal networks. Also the bizarre poverty degree in the country cultivates a system in which money can buy virtually everything including political power, unhealthy social consideration and criminality (Andres, 2008 cited in Okafor, 2014). In the other hand, effective control and regulation of cross-border activities by the security forces of the regional member states and ECOWAS at large are critically weak.

The security operatives are perhaps ill equipped to deal with challenges of the contemporary criminal networks within the states and across the borders. At the home level (that is, Igboland) the level of corruption and collusion with the criminal networks by the security officials are reportedly high. The movement of persons and goods is facilitated by these weaknesses and criminals are taking the advantage to further their activities (Fitzgibbon, 2003 cited in Okafor, 2014). The standard procedure in our societies entails a successful individual entrepreneur inviting one or more junior relatives or dependants to join him or her in an illegal business deal. Since the 1990s, slavery or related criminal activities have become widespread and highly sophisticated. They have served as an industry for former combatants and transnational (Andrés 2008 cited in Okafor, 2014). This has provoked the present study on the role of Igbo Language as indices in curbing modern day slavery.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the role of Igbo Language as indices in curbing modern day slavery in South-Eastern Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the following:

1. Whether there are slavery activities in the South-eastern Nigeria.
2. The group(s) more vulnerable to slavery in South-Eastern Nigeria.
3. Whether Igbo language is used to speak to erring youth.
4. Whether Igbo proverbs are used to curb slavery.
5. Whether the government is doing anything about slavery in Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. Are there slavery activities in the South-eastern Nigeria?
2. Are there groups (s) more vulnerable to slavery in South-Eastern Nigeria?
3. Is Igbo language used to speak to erring youth?
4. Are Igbo proverbs used to curb slavery?
5. Has the government being doing anything about slavery in Nigeria?

Igbo language: Concept and functions

Language is an integral part of culture which reflects many features of a given culture. It is the essence of culture as well as a medium for cultural transmission. Language can be used in various ways in a social setting which include; conveying a derogatory message against a person or group The language is used to speak to the conscience of the erring youth through various agencies like, the home, folktales, school, etc.,

Igbo language is the principal language of the Igbo people, an ethnic group of the South Eastern part of Nigeria. Native speakers of Igbo language are also found in some parts of South-South zone of Nigeria. Igbo is spoken in such states as Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo and some parts of Rivers and Delta States. Igbo language is officially recognized as one of the three major official languages in Nigeria. According to Odokara and Nwankwo (2019) the word, 'Igbo' has three uses;

1. To describe indigenous territory
2. To describe the domestic speakers of the language and
3. To describe the language spoken by them.

When the White people came to Igbo land before the 70s for evangelizations, they were unable to pronounce the alphabet 'gb' in 'Igbo' so they pronounced 'Ibo' instead of 'Igbo'. From 1961, when the present orthography was recommended, there was nothing like the word 'Ibo' in speech and in writing. According to Odumchi (2015), the word Igbo has three meanings. They are;

1. The people
2. The language
3. The region

Igbo language is one of the languages that perform certain basic functions that a language is known with. It is informative, which means it informs us, and tells us what we know and what we may not know. This function helps the native speaker in the propagation of knowledge. Without informative role of Igbo language, it will be difficult for anyone to be a partaker in the interactional process of the language. This is given the fact that information is paramount in any conversation. So many happenings in Igbo society is communicated to the people through their language (Igbo). To appeal to the emotion of people in order to arouse feelings of pity, joy, sadness and anger etc., Igbo language directs the actions of the people. Igbo language is linked to culture because culture is embedded in language. Every language is a reflection of cultural evolution. It is a language of commerce in many parts of Nigeria. The language is used in buying and selling of goods and services. Okanume (2020) sees language as a tool for conflict resolution. The author further says that language is used in preaching peace to every Nigerian and for conflict resolution among one another. Ihezuonu and Dimegesi (2020) opine that indigenous languages are languages native to a given region and spoken by people in a given environment. The authors further say that people tend to feel at home and comfortable when they communicate and interact with their native languages. Native language clears doubts, suspicions and smoothens all life activities and ensures mutual understanding. Without the ability to communicate, we would not have the world we have today.

Concept of modern day slavery

Modern day slavery has become a contemporary issue plaguing Nigeria today. It is an illegal type of trade carried out by individuals or group of persons within and across the country. Slavery dates back to earliest human history where wars among tribes and nations of the world were main causative factors. The winner in any war sees human beings as part of commodities to be plundered in which case they were either killed, imprisoned or worse still retained and reduced to slaves. Smith (2013) noted that these slaves were prisoners of war, debtors, criminals etc., they were considered a symbol of power, wealth and status in the custody of their masters. The abolition of slave trade in the 19th century only ended on paper.

Modern day slavery is happening everywhere in the world but available records show that, it is more prevalent in African continent due to poverty. Most of the victims of modern day slavery are children, teenage girls, boys and women exploited sexually on a daily basis.

Slavery is the act of subjecting someone to hard labour out of his willingness or deprivation of someone's freedom. Slavery manifests in various forms in our society today. When a husband maltreats his wife and does not give her freedom of speech, such a woman is in slavery or vice versa. In some hospitals, some patients become slaves to the hospital owners because they cannot offset their bills. Hornby (2010) defines slavery as the state of being a slave or the practice of having slaves.

Ubah (2015) asserts that slavery which is an aged long phenomenon has been rebranded in various ways. The author goes on to say that even in our homes, a new kind of slavery is obtained whereby the mistress over burdens the maid with responsibilities. Slavery refers to, a condition in which individuals are owned by others who control where they live and what they work. Slavery is a system which includes; hard labor or forced labor in which people are held against their will. This means that slaves do not have freedom to make their own decisions about their work because they are bought and sold like property. Ashamu (2000), contend that slavery is a derivative of the word 'slave'- a person captured and sold in exchange for goods and latter made to work under tutelage for his master.

Modern day slavery or contemporary slavery according to (Wikipedia 2018), refers to institutional slavery that continues to exist in present day society. Ilo (2017) says that Modern day slavery is involved in human trafficking. Most of the victims of modern day slavery are children, teenage girls, boys and women exploited sexually on a daily basis.

Forms of modern day slavery

Forced labor: This is any work or services which people are forced to do against their will under the threat of some form of punishment. They are treated as property and exploited commercially. According Aziza (2020), forced labour is described as the physical and psychological manipulation or coercion to force a person to work. It could affect a child or an adult. In any case, the person is made to work against his/her will.

Bonded labor or debt labor: This type of slavery compels an individual to work in order to repay a debt. The difference between this type of slavery and others is that sometimes the laborer and the employer enter into a mutual agreement but the condition may be more beneficial to the employer than the worker. If they cannot pay off their initial debts, they continue to be slave. Sometimes, the value of their work in most times greater than the original sum of money "borrowed" Ajagun, (2012). In some cases, the debt is not directly owed by the victim but by the victim's ancestors.

Sex slavery: These are men, women or children that are exploited in the commercial sex industry, which may include; prostitution, pornography, erotic entertainment etc. Most Nigerian girls are taken to Italy or any other part of the world in the name of giving them good jobs but on getting to their destinations are lured into sex machines. There are occasions where up to five or ten men have sexual intercourse with one girl every day, and if she refuses she may be killed.

Child slavery: This describes all child labor obtained from individual under the age of 18 through the means of force especially in domestic work. In Igboland, some house wives collect children as house helps and promised their parents to take good care of them or send them to school but when they get to the city, these children are turned into slaves and are given hazardous work. Child slavery can be in the form of turning a child into prostitution.

There are situations, where a child is raped by her father or older male servant in the house and she is threatened to be killed if she reveals to anyone. This makes the child live in such slavery condition all through her life. There are cases of child slavery every day around the globes.

Domestic servitude: This describes slaves that are forced to work in extremely hidden workplaces or private homes. They become slaves when their employers use force, fraud or coercion to control or convince an employee that they have no choice than to comply. He must carry out duties assigned to him. Sometimes you hear the master say, “I don’t care whether you are dying or not, all I know is that you do what I asked you to do”. The plight of a slave is very terrible and pathetic

Human trafficking: Human trafficking can be seen as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring of persons by use of force, threat, abduction and having control over another person, for purposes of exploitation. The trafficked people are used for commercial sex workers or engaged in other dehumanizing jobs. Oganwu (2020) asserts that human trafficking and modern slavery are used as umbrella terms to refer to both sex trafficking and compelled labour. The researcher further maintained that human trafficking is the illegal trade in human beings for the purpose of reproduction, slavery, commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour.

When I was 15, a woman initially helped me and sent me to England. On the first day in England, a man came, raped me and beat me. I was terrified; he forced me to have sex with lots of different men he brought to the house. It was horrible (Antislavery/NET; 2019)

These traffickers come in the name of help. As can be seen in the above conversation, initially; this woman was kind to the girl just to convince her and finds her way out.

Many people that fall victim of trafficking want to escape poverty or improve their lives and support their families. Sometimes these people borrow money from their traffickers in advance to pay for arranging the job, travel and accommodation and when they get there, the story changes. Ikenga and Ezeom (2020), opine that there has been an increase in the internal trafficking of women and children and this nature of trafficking is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. The authors further say that, the victims are recruited from the rural communities and taken to the major cities and towns such as Abuja, Lagos, Port Harcourt, predominantly for exploitative domestic work, scavenging, begging and prostitution. It is obvious that human trafficking starts its journey from the rural areas so curbing it need to star from the grass root using the people’s language in the campaign against it.

Orji, Ahura and Obi (2014), assert that in human trafficking, a human being is recruited and transported to another place or country for purpose of making money. The authors further opined that human beings are sold as if they are goods or commodities. The authors listed the following factors as being responsible for human trafficking.

Poverty: Many people live in abject poverty and have no real prospect for a decent living. Children involved in trafficking are from poor homes. Due to poverty, children are now expected to contribute to the up-keep of their families and as such involved in street hawking and other odds jobs at very tender age. This kind of condition can lead them or their wards into slavery when offered a more decent job and this may turn out something else than what was promised.

Unemployment: Lack of employment in our society has caused some of the young school leavers to travel overseas in search of job or greener pasture. When they get there, they found out that they have been deceived. Ugwuanyi (2015), stated that unemployment rate in the second quarter of 2015 rose to 8.2 percent from 7.5 percent recorded in the preceding quarter; the resultant effect of these are famine, more street begging, stagnation, and high rate of crime. Therefore, unemployment is one of the major factors of human trafficking in Nigeria.

Lack of contentment/greed: Many young people in contemporary Nigeria are lazy and want to generate quick wealth. As a result, they engage in kidnapping, human trafficking, robbery and prostitution. Trafficking purposes include; forced labor, forced begging, forced criminality, domestic servitude, forced marriage or organ harvesting.

Government Efforts to Curb Modern Day Slavery in Nigeria

The government at the various levels has taken various measures to tackle the problems of human trafficking and modern day slavery in Nigeria but it has yielded negative result. At the federal level, government according to Umma (2022) has not been unmindful of the problem; it has addressed the problem by establishing the National Orientation Agency (NOA) in September 1993, and Citizenship and Leadership Training Centre (CLTC) in 2000. Other efforts have been made through collaboration with the Police, customs, immigration, Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour (NACTAL) and National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP). According to Vanguard Newspaper,(24 August, 2022), in commemoration of the international Day for the Remembrance of Slave Trade and its Abolition, Government has implemented reforms and legislation to sustain the gains recorded in combating the scourge especially in rehabilitation and settlement of returning illegal migrants. The writer further reiterated that government should partner with the Private sector and international Development Organization with their support, the scourge of human trafficking and other forms of human exploitation will be contained.

Effects and Consequences of Modern Day Slavery

There are negative effects on the society for both the trafficker and the trafficked. The society is depopulated while the trafficker is stigmatized.

Effects and Consequences of Modern Day Slavery According to (Oluku-Newton 2020)

Death: Modern day slavery involves the use of force and violence. The victims are made to work under harsh working conditions, drug addiction and alcohol; some are violated and raped or sexually molested to death in resistance to being forced to work, such death is a loss to the family or society.

Physical and emotional trauma: modern day slavery, due to use of force, fraud to exploit, it has devastating impact on the victim who suffers lasting physical and emotional trauma as a result of rape, threats against family and self.

Loss of man power: Human trafficking decreases the labour force of the countries of origin of the victims.

Imprisonment and confiscation of property: any trafficker arrested and tried and found guilty may end up being imprisoned, while his property confiscated and may be sold by government.

Effects on the health, safety and security of nation: Modern day slavery increases health risks globally and increases the rate of crime. Trafficked girls or women are prone to venereal diseases including HIV/AIDs was first discovered among sex workers and homosexual.

Women who fall into this condition may not be allowed to use condom or other protective methods. This may result to severe mental and emotional consequences, including anxiety disorder, depression, post- traumatic stress disorder, and feeling of quilt etc.

Drug and alcohol addiction: Most of the modern day slavery victims end up being drug and alcohol addicts, for them to feel high and turn workaholic. The victims are sometimes forced to use pills and condoms indiscriminately to prevent unwanted pregnancy. This can lead to prolonged effects in later life like infertility.

Stigmatization: This is the act of treating somebody in a way that makes him/her feels very bad or unimportant to himself or the society; because some of the girls or boys are locked up in a hotel rooms where contracted men or women sleep with them at will.

Agencies through Which Igbo Language is Used to Curb Modern Day Slavery.

The Igbos are not cultureless people and for the Igbos to maintain or hold on their cultural heritage, the language must be preserved and remains the means of communication and medium of instructions. Igbo language is such an important language of heritage. This language (Igbo) is very rich in cultural values. Both Igbos at home and Diasporas use it for communication. For the Igbos, to preserve their culture, norms, values and rules, they need to formulate a plan to use in teaching their children the language. These are done through various agencies. Language is the process of teaching and learning of the various norms, values, issues, and activities of the society through which an individual is made normal human being, who possesses a cultural norms and is capable and able to participate actively in social relations within his society. This means that the citizens are educated on the values, attitudes and beliefs of the society by means of language.

The family: The family is the first place or agency an Igbo child makes his first contact just like any other child from any other family. The family is made up of the father, mother, siblings and the extended family members. Children learn a lot from their parents, siblings and other extended members of their family. Therefore, these people should through their native language (Igbo), teach the children the various norms and values of their culture for instance, do not steal, do not cheat, be honest, love of fellow man, good social relationship and hard work etc. Parents bring to the knowledge of their children, things happening in the society like human trafficking, cultism and child labor etc., and this is best done interacting and communicating with the child through the child's mother tongue. Oluku-Newton (2020) says that 'It is the responsibility of the family to do everything possible to curb bad traits or behavior through strict disciplinary measures because the bible says 'spare the rod and spoil the child''.

Here are some proverbial expressions in Igbo language that parents use to teach a child moral values in Igbo society.

1. Onyena- elo mkpuru udara mara ka onu ike ya ha.
He who swallows apple seed (udara) should know the size of his/her anus. One should know the consequences of any action he/she takes. Offenders of law usually go in for it.
2. Ukwugwoọ aju afọ anoro aguu.
If you do not work you do not eat. Parents use this proverb to discourage laziness in their children.
3. Aka aja aja ne-ebute onu mmanu mmanu.

Hard work brings success or puts food on ones table.

4. O chọọ ihe ukwu ga-ahụ agba Enyi.
A greedy person always enters into trouble. It is greed that leads people into trafficking this modern day.
5. Nwata tylie nnaya elu, oḡoḡo awuchie ya anya.
If a child disrespects/disobeys his/her elders, it will not go well with that child. Children are admonished to obey their parents so that things will go well with them.
6. Ori n'ike n'ike, na-ala n'ike n ike.
If one does not take life easy, he/she will die untimely death. This proverb is usually used to curtail youths' excesses in the quest for money especially in a bad way. Youths should take life easy so that they can live long to achieve their dreams.
7. Oke soro ngwere maammiri, mmirikọọ ngwere, oḡaghiakọ oke. This proverb is used by parents to draw a child's ear about following bad friends. Sometimes, one who is the culprit may escape or go scourge free and the innocent one is caught.
8. Ewu anaghị eri ji sowe ewu na-eri ji, ya eriwe ji.
Bad company corrupts good character. Children should avoid the company of bad friends and parents are to know the type of friends their children keep.

The school: The school is the second agent of socialization after the family through which a child is influenced positively or negatively. The school is formalized. There are planned timetable and diversified curriculum for the effective transmission of culture in all aspects. The Igbo language teacher teaches the child the norms of his society in his native language or mother tongue. The evil vices in the society are taught in Igbo language such as kidnapping, cultism prostitution laziness and to be contented with what they have. The Igbo language literature is rich in textbooks written in the language to teach children the evils in Igbo society. The school should include Igbo language in the curriculum through which modern day slavery be discouraged.

The peer-group: This group is another agent of socialization and is made up of some members, sharing relatively equal status, bounded together by some intimate ties and sharing some ideals to which they agree. All children who are playmates of an age bracket are members of this group. This group tends to socialize the individual through discussion, communication of ideas and consideration of issues of interest among members in common. Parents should have duty over their children and the type of friends they have or follow. This saying "show me your friend, and I will tell you who you are" is normally true. Call your child's friend that manifests bad behavior and advise him through the language he understands. This is necessary because bad company corrupts good character. Some parents, instead of using the child's language which the child can understand, they use English language. In many situations/occasions, parents use these proverbs to advice or caution their children that indulge in bad character in the society.

Mass media: The role of the media is to inform, educate and entertain the society. Mass media socializes the youth or the public through what they read, what they listen to and what they watch. In all the Igboland states, programmes are done in Igbo language so that both the educated and uneducated are carried along. People tend to believe more in what they see than what they hear. Screens and stage plays are acted in Igbo language, showing some of these social vices and their effects on individuals and the society at large. Adaeze, Umeabali and Okoro (2014) noted that information is an indispensable factor for the development of any society. Information can make or mar a person depending on the source by which the information is coming. Awareness through the use of Igbo language to get the grass root can help curb the indices of modern day slavery.

Folktale: This is another avenue which Igbo language uses to fight modern day slavery in Igboland. Stories are told to children in their native tongue during moonlight games. The culture of the Igbo people is portrayed through language. The Igbo frowns at greed, laziness, wickedness, heartlessness and so on. According to Emenanjo (1977), folktale teaches the Igbo child how to behave towards gods, spirits and his fellow human beings. Emenyeonu (1987) agrees that oral literature “had a definite purpose to instruct the young in the principles of right and wrong in the society”. Folktale is a powerful weapon used for the education of the members of the society. There is no other means of passing on these values except through Igbo language which transmits culture of the people. Today, modern technology like television, hand-set, cinema etc., have taken the place of folktales. Children do not go out for moonlight games any longer instead, they watch videos, do internet browsing where some of these bad acts are learnt. They can also browse and read Igbo language stories that can help them in life. Vanguard Newspaper, (25 Feb., 2016) gave these 3 (three) amazing folktales in Igbo that teach or encourage positive behaviors in training the young ones in Igbo land.

Obaledo: This folktale talks about a young pretty girl who meets a great misfortune due to her defiance and decision to disobey her parents. The moral lesson from this story is that disobedience is not good.

The King’s Drum: In this folktale, a greedy and envious tortoise ends up entrapping himself because of greed over a King’s drum that produces food and great wealth each time it was beaten. This type of folktale teaches children that greed and envy leads one into trouble.

The disobedient daughter who married a skull: This tale narrates the story of a maiden who was so pretty and had suitors from around the world. Unfortunately rejected all but fell in love to a demon from the spirit world. He went around the village and collected body parts and became extraordinary handsome. After the marriage, the demon took her to the spirit world where she suffered. She was however, very nice and helpful to the demon’s mother and in appreciation of act of kindness, the demon’s mother helped her escape and sent her back to her parents. Young girls are taught through this tale not to be too selective during marriage and to be kind to their mother in-laws.

The church: The church is a place where people who believe in the same faith or supreme-being called God worship. The church inculcates in the child, faith and moral values, through the use of holy book, called Bible. The church uses language of the immediate environment to teach faith, love, hard work and values to the youths so that when they become adult members, they will not engage in slavery act or be enslaved by anybody. The church teaches its members love of neighbor, respect for one another and for constituted authority. All these are carried out through organizations in the church like the youth organizations, men’s organization and women organization.

The age grade: The age grade is a very strong association in Igboland. According to Ugiagbe (2012), age grade is made up of group of persons who, according to societal norms and values, are regarded as people of the same age but, they do vary from one community to the other. In this association, young people are exposed to life challenges, acts and their consequences. Igbo culture, through the use of Igbo language, teach the members of this group good moral, hard work, and as one of the duties of the age grade is to help in community service also keeping security of lives and property of the community.

Non-governmental organization:

Through non-governmental organizations (NGOS), Igbo language is used to create awareness of these ugly practices of today's slavery. This body can organize workshops to sensitize the public on the effects of modern day slavery in Igbo land.

Methodology

This study, adopts a qualitative research design. The reason for this design is because the balloting method of the random sampling technique which gives every element or subset of the population equal chance of being selected for the study was used to select two states out of the five states in the South East (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States). The purposive sampling technique was used to select four hundred respondents that is, two hundred per state (the respondents are mostly local settlers). The two state selected were Ebonyi and Enugu State. This design identified and structurally analysed how Igbo language is used through various agencies to curb modern day slavery in Igbo land. The research method, gives in-depth questioning of the respondents based on their responses, analysis of data is based on descriptive statistics.

Presentation of results

Research question 1: Are there slavery activities in the South-eastern Nigeria? The result is presented below:

TABLE 1

Summary of frequency of responses on: Are there slavery activities in the South-eastern Nigeria?

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Child labour	141	35.5
2.	Sexual mutilation	21	5.3
3.	Sale of children	52	13.0
4.	Child prostitution	58	14.5
5.	Child pornography	19	4.8
6.	Use of children in arm conflict	26	6.5
7.	Debt bondage	37	9.5
8.	Traffic in person	34	8.5
9.	Sale of human organ	11	2.8

From the table above, 141 (35.5%) respondents are aware of child labour as slavery activities around them. 21 (5.3%) respondents are aware that sexual mutilation as slavery activities around them. 52 (13.0%) respondents are aware of sale of children as slavery activities around them. 58 (14.5%) respondents are aware of child prostitution as slavery activities around them. 19 (4.8%) respondents are aware of child pornography as slavery activities around them. 26 (6.5%) respondents are aware of use of children in arm conflict as slavery activities around them. 37 (9.5%) respondents are aware of debt bondage as slavery activities

around them. 34 (8.5%) respondents are aware of traffic in persons as slavery activities around them. And 11 (2.8%) respondents are aware of sale of human organs as slavery activities around them.

Research question 2: Are there group(s) more venerable to slavery in South-Eastern Nigeria? The result is presented below:

TABLE 2

Summary of frequency of responses on: Are there group(s) more venerable to slavery in South-Eastern Nigeria?

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Children	170	42.5
2.	Young women	130	32.5
3.	Old women	50	12.5
4.	Young men	50	12.5

From the table 2 above, 170 (42.5%) respondents are aware that children are more venerable to slavery. While 130 (32.5%) respondents are aware that young women are more venerable to slavery. Also, 50 (12.5%) respondents are aware that old women are more venerable to slavery. And 50 (12.5%) respondents are aware that young men are more venerable to slavery.

Research question 3: Is Igbo language used to speak to erring youth? The result is presented in the table below:

TABLE 3

Summary of mean rating of respondents on: Is Igbo language used to speak to erring youth?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Remark
1.	Youths understand better when spoken to using Igbo language	53	108	106	133	400	2.20	Disagreed
2.	Youths assimilate more when spoken to using Igbo language	54	214	54	78	400	2.61	Agreed
3.	Youths seem to give more listening ear when spoken to using Igbo language	27	186	107	80	400	2.40	Disagreed
4.	Youths give attention to any matter when spoken to using Igbo language	0	53	240	107	400	1.87	Disagreed
5.	Igbo language makes matters clearer to youth than English language	81	213	80	26	400	2.87	Agreed
	Grand Total						2.39	Disagreed

From the table above, items 1, 3,4 and the grand mean have means of 2.20, 2.40, 1.87 and 2.39 respectively which are below the cut-off point of 2.50, while items 2 and 5 with means of 2.61 and 2.87 respectively which are above the cut –off mean point of 2.50. This indicates that Igbo language used to speak to erring youth do very little in curbing slavery in the land.

Research question 4: Are Igbo proverbs used to curb slavery? The result is presented in the table below:

TABLE 4

Summary of mean rating of respondents on: Are Igbo proverbs used to curb slavery?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Remark
1.	Igbo proverbs teach youth the disadvantages of slavery	134	187	27	52	400	3.01	Agreed
2.	Igbo proverbs show the bad that slavery had done to our people	53	267	80	0	400	2.93	Agreed
3.	Igbo proverbs showcase the evil in slavery	107	214	79	0	400	3.70	Agreed
4.	Igbo proverbs brings out the danger in slavery	80	266	54	0	400	3.06	Agreed
5.	Igbo proverbs discourages slavery	214	134	52	0	400	3.41	Agreed
	Grand Total						3.22	Agreed

From the table above, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and the grand mean have means of 3.01, 2.93, 3.70, 3.06, 3.41 and 3.22 respectively which are above the cut-off point of 2.50. This indicates that Igbo proverbs can be used to curb slavery in the land.

Research question 5: Has the government being doing anything about slavery in Nigeria? The result is presented in the table below.

TABLE 5

Summary of mean rating of respondents on: Has the government being doing anything about slavery in Nigeria?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Total	X	Remark
1.	Government overlook human trafficking cases	52	54	107	187	400	1.9	Disagreed
2.	Perpetrators of human trafficking are sometimes not punished by the law	0	80	160	133	400	2.00	Disagreed
3.	When the people involved in slavery are influential there law do not punish them	53	160	107	80	400	2.47	Disagreed
4.	When the less privilege people are involved in slavery the law punish them	107	161	80	92	400	2.81	Agreed
5.	Because of corruption the law is not strict on human trafficking	26	135	186	53	400	2.34	Disagreed
	Grand Total						2.31	Disagreed

From the table above, items 1, 2, 3, 5 and the grand mean have means of 1.93, 2.00, 2.47, 2.34 and 2.31 respectively which are below the cut-off point of 2.50, while item 4 has a mean of 2.81 which is above the cut-off mean point of 2.50. This indicates that the government has been doing something about slavery in Nigeria.

Findings of the study

The study investigated role of Igbo language in curbing the indices of modern day slavery in Igbo land. The findings revealed that:

- (a) Igbo language is used to speak to the erring youth through various agencies like; family, church, school, mass media etc.
- (b) Igbo proverbs which are part of the people's culture could be used to check or curb modern day slavery in Igbo land.
- (c) Language is the only instrument used to pass on information from one person to another.
- (d) It is discovered that slavery is still prominent in our society today despite all efforts from the government and some good spirited individuals.
- (e) Children and women are more vulnerable to human trafficking.
- (f) Government is weak in terms of enforcing the law by punishing the offenders because all government efforts to stop slavery have proved abortive.

Conclusion

Slavery and modern day slavery is a situation where an individual has no right or freedom of his/her own in doing what he/she wants. Modern day slavery has eaten deep into our society and manifests in form of human trafficking, child labour, domestic servitude, kidnapping, forced labour etc. Curbing Modern Day slavery in Igbo land would go a long way through the use of Igbo language through the family, school, folktales, mass media, church and use of proverbs etc. Language as a veritable means of communication can re-orientate the erring youth to shun bad behaviors such as human trafficking, kidnapping, banditry, forced labour. Igbo language because of the population of its users, if properly utilized would enhance effective value re-orientation in both Igbo land and Nigeria at large.

Recommendations

Modern Day slavery may not be totally stopped but can be curbed in Igbo land, if the following recommendations are taken by both individuals and governments.

- i. Language teachers should be provided to schools to enable the school meet the demand of the society such as teaching the children in their mother tongue about the happenings in their immediate environment. When values and norms are taught to a child in his/her mother tongue the child understands it faster and better.
- ii. The mass media, as a matter of importance should present such programmes that can help eliminate human trafficking, child labour, prostitution, etc. in Igbo language.
- iii. Igbo language should be included in the school curriculum as a subject so that through the use of the language, modern day slavery could be taught to the students.
- iv. Language and literature are inseparable, therefore, proverbs and folktales in Igbo language should be used to warn youths against dangerous and anti-social practices, criticize such evils like kidnapping, trafficking, child labour etc.
- v. Parents should be educated to have the number of children they can take care or cater for through family planning by using Igbo language which they can understand easily to educate them. When they have the number of children they can cater for, they cannot force their children into hard labour, prostitution, early marriage.

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