

Nigeria immigration service and the challenge of cross border human trafficking in Nigeria 2011 – 2019

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Abstract

Human traffic is modern-day slavery. The phenomenon has generated a lot of attention among local and international communities. The menace has become a lucrative criminal business. Nigeria has acquired a reputation for being one of the leading African countries in human traffic, with cross-border and internal traffic. This research examined Nigeria Immigration Service and The Challenge of Cross Border Human Trafficking in Nigeria 2011-2019. Using structural functionalism theory as my analytical framework and on the strength of data generated from secondary sources through the interrogation of the hypothesis; Poor border management has negatively affected the capacity of Nigeria immigration service to curbing cross border human traffic 2011-2019. This study finds out that there are about 1400 footpaths unknown by security agencies the borders are not manned and unprotected. Moreover, inadequate personnel has equally contributed to poor border management. However, the researcher recommends that: Nigeria immigration service cannot be solely responsible for the prevention of cross border human trafficking it should liaise and network with other sister security departments; this is equally important to fill intelligence gaps, minimize costs of intelligence collection, and establish diplomatic relations among states.

Keywords: Nigeria Immigration service, human traffic, porous border, inadequate funding

Introduction

Human traffic is recognized as a modern form of slavery and thus is not historically new. Cross-border human traffic is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon involving various stakeholders at the institutional and commercial levels. Human traffic is a global, demand-driven enterprise with a large market for cheap labour, often faced with insufficient or ineffective policy frameworks or trained personnel to prevent it. Practically no country in Africa is immune to trade. All of these countries are affected as resources, destination, transport or a combination of the three. Human traffic is the third-largest crime after arms trafficking and drug smuggling and occurs in many forms: forced labour, sex trafficking, indebtedness of migrant workers, and forced child labour (UNESCO, 2006). Nigeria serves as a source, transit and destination country for the trade of men, women and children to Europe, the Middle East and other countries (Mashil, 2015 p.5). Nigeria has earned a reputation as one of the leading African countries in cross-border human traffic and internal trade. Nigerian women and children were been transported from Nigeria to other countries, and they underwent dangerous work. Primarily, women, girls and men are trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labour and organ harvesting with the return of civilian rule in 1999, the expectation that the problem of human rights abuses of which human traffic is only an extreme form would reduce if not eliminated.

In line with this expectation Nigeria under the new civilian administration, ratified the United Nations Protocol to punish traffic in persons especially, women and children. In 2001 and adopted the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition), Law Enforcement and Administration Act 2003; It makes Nigeria one of the few African countries that have adopted such a law. Nigeria also approved the Child Rights Act in 2003, which comprehensively deals with the issues of child trafficking. The government has at various times implemented economic empowerment and poverty reduction programs to address some issues of economic inequality and eliminate the conditions that allow human traffic to flourish. At the non-governmental level, Nigerian NGOs actively get involved in efforts to combat human traffic. Among the NGOs that have emerged in this regard is the National Council of Women Associations, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and the Foundation for the Elimination of Trafficking in Women and Child Labor (WOTCLEF). Agbo (2013) stated that the activities of these NGOs have gone a long way in revealing the different dimensions of the victims despite these initiatives, human traffics remains a critical problem in Nigeria.

The Nigeria Immigration Service is a paramilitary organization established to control the entry and exit of all persons in Nigeria and as such aims to monitor the largely porous border through its officers who are sent to these places. In addition to other functions, the duties of the Agency (Nigerian Immigration Service) consist of all international migration activities, from the identity of migrants to the process of leaving the nation-state or entering the state (Ebri, 2017, p. 23), it aims to guard the great borders of the country by its officers who have been placed in such places. Despite the efforts of cross-border security agencies like Nigerian Immigration Services, etc. Nigeria's borders have been described as porous, enabling all kinds of cross-border activities such as human traffic, smuggling, drug trafficking, arms theft, money laundering and illegal arms trafficking. However, the agency (Nigerian Immigration Service) has many challenges that can hamper these jobs. The challenges of cross-border human trafficking in Nigeria have attracted the attention of scholars. Despite the modest efforts of these scholars, the link between the Nigerian immigration service and the challenge of cross-border human traffic in Nigeria still requires systematic analysis.

The Problematique

Despite the efforts of cross-border security agencies like Nigeria Immigration services. Nigeria borders have been porous by allowing all sorts of cross-border criminal activities such as human traffics, smuggling, drug traffics, arm robbery, money laundry and illicit arms traffic.

However, the agency (Nigeria Immigration Service) has various challenges that may hinder its functions. These challenges of cross border human trafficking in Nigeria have drawn the attention of scholars. Despite the modest effort of these scholars, the link between the Nigeria Immigration Service and the challenge of cross border human trafficking in Nigeria still requires systemic analysis. It is against this backdrop that that study intends to investigate if poor border management weakened the capacity of Nigeria immigration service to curb cross border human trafficking from 2011 to 2019.

Summary of Gap in the literature

Relevant literature was explored and interrogated by various scholars like Adeola and Fayomi (2012), Onuoha (2013), Akinyemi (2013), Ewetan and Ese (2014), Odoma

(2014), Okereke (2016), Adaramodu (2016) among many others on the issue of security of Nigeria border and its challenges. They attributed the inherent challenge within the border specifically to issues of border porosity, inadequate agency officials in various border areas, poorly patterned borders, inadequate equipment, lack of an appropriate mechanism for monitoring movements and illegal activities across these borders, inadequately trained personnel etc.

Scholars such as Stohl and Tuttle (2009), Nte (2011), Sunday, Oji and Okechukwu (2014), and Okumu (2011) had further attributed the problematic issue of border insecurity in Nigeria to the diverse and vast nature of the country and her poor border management system.

Akinyemi (2019). In his study on porous borders and increasing Human Trafficking in West Africa: Issues and Challenges, noted that one of the major consequences of porous borders in West Africa today is the rise of trans-border crime like human traffic. He opined the never-ending business of trafficking in humans across borders today is organized by individuals and groups, with the aid of government officials. He concludes that human traffics can be reduced to the barest minimum in the region if West African human and material resources are combined to, expand regional capacity for border security.

Sawadogo, W.R (2012). Investigated The Challenges of Transnational Human Trafficking in West Africa. He found out among other things that, trafficking in persons appears to be a particular form of violence against women and children. It deteriorates human relationships since it drives the trafficked persons from their families and regions. Thus creating an atmosphere of social frustration and a negative influence on the dynamics of regional integration, thereby compromising the national and regional efforts of West African states to change the destiny of their societies. Human traffic is an egregious and profound abuse of human rights. It maintains people in a state of dependence since it hinders the freedom of individuals, which is akin to modern-day slavery and thus a serious human rights violation.

David Held and Anthony G. McGrew (2002) makes it obvious that the causes of transnational crimes can also be explained, through certain theories of international relations. These include the political philosophy that promotes individual liberty and the free exchange of goods and market privatization that has, in turn, led to illicit human trafficking for economic gain.

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the statistics of the International Labor Organization (ILO), around 200,000 to 300,000 children are being trafficked each year for forced labour and sexual exploitation in West and Central Africa. In addition, according to a 2001 survey on child labour in West and Central Africa, about 330,000 children were employed in the Cocoa Agricultural Industry in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Out of 230,000 children working in Côte d'Ivoire, 12,000 had no family connection to the cocoa farm, or any other local farms in the country an alarming reality is that girls are more frequently the victims of child trafficking than boys.

Babatunde, Alao, & Adewumi, (2018). In their research on border security issues and challenges of the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS), noted that though Nigeria Custom Service is challenged by transnational security actors and vulnerabilities as well as

numerous inherent weaknesses, from within the agency itself new patterns of security interaction should be adopted among others by the NCS.

Ebri (2017). In her study on International Migration and the study of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria. The role of the Nigeria Immigration Service study reveals that the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) has some challenges on border security and these challenges hinder the success of this agency in bringing socio-economic development into the Nigerian State. However, for Nigeria to benefit profitably from International Migration, the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) has to be efficient in its duties and also needs the cooperation of the Nigerian federal government as it relates to socio-economic development and security functions.

Thus, none of these scholars has looked at Nigeria Immigration Service and the Challenge of Cross Border Human Trafficking in Nigeria, 2011 – 2019. Therefore, this study intends to fill this gap.

Theorizing Weak Border Management

The study is anchored, on Gabriel Almond and Powell structural functionalism theory which was propounded, in the 1970s, as an approach to comparing political systems. They argued that to understand a political system it is necessary to understand not only its institutions or structures also their respective functions they, also insisted that for the institutions to be properly understood, but they must also be placed in a meaningful and dynamic historical context.

In addition to structures, Almond and Powell showed that a political system consists of various functions among them is political socialization, recruitment and communication. Socialization refers to how societies pass along their values and beliefs to succeeding generations, and in political terms, describe the process by which a society inculcates civic virtues or the habits of effective citizenship. Structural functionalists argued that all political systems, including Third World systems, could most fruitfully be studied and compared based on how different structures performed these functions in the various political system.

In applying the Almond and Powell structural functionalism approach to the explanation of immigration service and the challenge of cross border human traffic in Nigeria, we must first understand how the structures of the political system work and how they (in practice and other ways) interact with other systems and the surrounding environment. This means that the Nigerian Immigration Service is not only responsible for preventing the traffic of cross-border people, it is also responsible for communicating with other sister security departments. Customs, the police, civil defence, the army, the navy, civil society organizations, local and high-level authorities, and other social and non-governmental organizations play a role in achieving national security goals. This is very important, to fill the gaps in intelligence, reduce the costs of recognition and establish diplomatic relations between two countries.

Border Administration – It is known for immigration, customs, and fiscal and policy purposes to control and control the purpose of government. The movement of people and goods across the borders of a country for the national interest (economic development, security and peace)

Border management also includes maintaining border beacons that represent the physical boundaries of the state. Border management is a known process between a country and its neighbours. It can't be done on the one hand, and it's very effective and efficient when working in a territory.

Border Management has several actors:

- Key government agencies (Customs, Immigration, Police, Armed Forces, Ministry of Agriculture – Quarantine Objectives), which in most cases operate independently without a network or exchange of information.

- Airlines

- Shipping companies

- Local border authorities

- International trading companies and individuals

- Individuals (border residents or migrants crossing borders, such as traders, relatives, tourists or terrorists) determine a state's perception of external risks.

Border insecurity and border management responses

In other words, how a country/state/government manages its borders shows its fear and comfort. The border administration is, of course, a declaration of sovereignty. Failure by a state to govern its borders can undermine local and international law. The legal status of a state/government depends on how it manages its borders. A.D. In 1933, the Montevideo Convention established the rights and obligations of governments with 4 criteria for state sovereignty – a sustainable population; Specific region; Government; And the ability to interact with other states. In other words:

- State ownership is equal to sovereignty

- Citizenship is defined by states

- The state is defined by borders

- Boundaries allow countries to participate in international relations

- Boundaries define government and citizenship relations.

Methods

This study adopted Ex-post facto research design because there was no experiment conducted in the research. Ex-post facto also studies facts that have already occurred in the past. Kerlinger and Rint (1986) opined that Ex-post facto investigation seeks to reveal possible relationships by observing an existing condition and searching back in time for contributing factors. This research design enabled us to produce data to answer the research questions and test our research hypotheses.

This study employed a documentary method of data collection based on the analysis of documents/materials. Secondary data was used for this research work. Secondary sources of data refer to a set of data gathered or authored by another person, usual data from available data archives, either in the form of documents or survey results and codebooks. Asika (1990) opined that primary data are self-generated and consist of experimental designs, case studies, survey data, focus, participant observation data etc. (Burns and Grove, 2013; p.19).

Furthermore, the documentary method of data collection was used, in this study because it is used to obtain in-depth information and concept clarification to facilitate instrument designs. A documentary method is more useful when used to interpret, illuminate and extract valued information to draw inferences from the available evidence to conclude. Obese cited in Nnabugwu (2006; p.72) argued that the advantage of the documentary

method lies in the fact that it can gain access to organizational structures, the bureaucratic discovery of unexpected phenomena.

A qualitative method of data analysis was adopted, in this research. It is a dynamic form of data analysis that is orient towards summarizing the informational contents of data. The qualitative analysis moves farther into the domain of interpretation because of the effort made to understand not only the manifest, the latent content of data with a view to discovery patterns or regularities in the data.

Data Presentation/ Findings

The main border countries with Nigeria are Cameroon (1,690 kilometres) to the east, Niger (1,497 kilometres) to the north, Benin (773 kilometres) to the west and Chad (87 kilometres) to the northeast. Most of these border areas are mountainous, or jungle, which makes effective border surveillance very difficult (Mustapha, 2014). Within these broad borders, there are more than hundreds of illegal routes in Nigeria that connect or take you to some countries around Africa. Nigeria borders are huge with hundreds of roads crossing the following countries: Cameroon, Chad and Niger, with links to Mali, Libya and Sudan. According to conservative estimates of the local population, there are more than 250 footpaths from the Damaturu / Maiduguri axis to or from Cameroon, Chad or Niger. Security agencies are mostly unfamiliar with these roads, have no crews, no protections and therefore serve as a means of trading arms and ammunition for Nigeria.

The negligence of border security and poor border management in Nigeria has largely contributed, to a prevalence of threats such as cross-border crimes, Nigerian's border security issues are distinctive when compared to the other countries of the world. Because of this fact, these borders are not monitored, patrolled or controlled. Consequently, these borders have become transit points for smuggling and other illegal cross-border activities Guy Martin, (2011). In other words, most, if not all the borders in Nigeria is transnational crime zones. The conundrum of national security in Nigeria has been compounded by the porous nature of Nigerian borders, when borders cease to function effectively, different forms of crimes prevail and the security of a state or region is put in serious jeopardy because borders constitute the most visible sign of the sovereignty of a State on its territory. Border management is therefore crucial to State involvement in the protection of its population against what it considers as threats, ranging from migration, international terrorism, and multiform trafficking as in human beings, drugs, raw materials or SALW (Jihan&Cédric, 2011).

Interestingly, Nigeria border points in the North-East and North-West no longer perform their strategic functions but serve as channels for smuggling of illicit materials into the country. The current security challenges in Nigeria where the nation's Northern borders with Niger and Chad witness the unrestrained incursion of armed bandits to terrorize innocent citizens in towns and villages on the Nigerian side of the border calls for the need to put in place an effective border control system (Makka, 2019)

Human Trafficking: The trafficking of children for prostitution and forms of exploitative labour is a widespread issue in Nigeria. Foreign children trafficked to Nigeria come mainly from Benin and Togo (an estimated 96%, with 90% of that figure coming from Benin alone), Cote d'Ivoire and Niger. Children as young as five and six years trafficked from Benin have been working in exploitive conditions in Nigeria mines in the Western part of the country. Trafficked girls are used for domestic services or street trading, as well as commercial sexual exploitation and boys, are generally forced to work on

plantations or in commercial farming, construction, quarries and mines or engaged in petty crimes and the drug trade (UNDOC, 2006). Concerning women trafficked to Europe for sexual exploitation, an estimated 94% are from Edo State while the remaining are from Delta, Kano and Borno states.

Major trafficking routs in Nigeria

There are four main smuggling routes from northern Nigeria: those travelling from Kebbi or Sokoto to the Republic of Benin to Niger, Ghana and Senegal, and from there to Libya, Algeria or Morocco. These are transit countries for destinations in the Middle East or Europe. The speeches of Zindel (Katsina Province) and Megatel (Jigawa Province) are used to smuggle people from Niger to Mali, Burkina Faso, Libya, Europe or the Middle East. People from Yobe and Borno provinces travel road land to Chad, Sudan and other countries. Mali is known as the trans camp of Sudanese and Nigerian traffickers. People can wait days or weeks to take their travel documents to Europe or the Middle East. The fourth transit route takes people from Adamawa and Taraba provinces (the two countries that have the most porous borders) from Cameroon to Gabon. These routes are used for the movement of women and young children outside Nigeria, through the southern centre, people are brought from Imo, Cross River and Akwa Ibom, to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon in exchange for cheap labour.

This special route takes months because Sudan has stricter immigration laws than Nigeria (Okoji, 2014) and smuggling victims from Nigeria are transported to West Africa via the land borders of Lagos, Ogun, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Borno and Yobe. Traffickers and victims travel across land borders in West African countries such as Benin, Togo, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Guinea and Ivory Coast. Road victims are transported to North African countries such as Morocco, Algeria or Libya. Victims can be sent directly to European countries from any of these African countries (Schengen 32). Otherwise, the victims would travel by sea from Morocco to Spain or by train or plane to France, Italy, passing through Algeria or Libya is usually by air to Europe or Morocco, and from there by sea. The Nigerian Program for the Netherlands states that women are sent to African countries such as Senegal, South Africa, Ghana, Gambia and Ivory Coast to learn about prostitution before being sent to Europe (Nigerian Platform Nederland, 2011). While waiting for documents or travel arrangements to European countries or other destinations, victims are forced into prostitution to provide for themselves and their traffickers.

In Nigeria, human trafficking and the fight against terrorism are leading to fragmentation of organizations and intelligence and a lack of policy coordination between security agencies. Moses (2013) emphasizes the need to reconsider the management and security of Nigeria borders and seaports in the face of these challenges (human trafficking). An effective fight against insurgents and weapons is already optical smuggling thus proliferation will remain an illusion.) He argues that there must be innovative technology and sound intelligence services to help protect our borders and that the use of innovative technologies – radars and warning systems – is the main way that modern peoples use tracking. Some radars can be used as a primary sensor to detect remote-tracking platforms. The Mobile Surveillance System offers a cost-effective way to monitor key areas with limited resources. At the same time, all of this, both on the ground and in the low airspace, will ensure strong cooperation between different security agencies, consisting of different soldiers across the country.

Lack of modern equipment and inadequate skills of border management staff

The poor staffing of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) also makes it difficult to manage the Nigerian borders. By and large, illicit transits dwarf these agents and security officials because of deficient preparation, work, and hardware (Adeyemi, 2013). Boundary monitors likewise gather pay-offs because they are not all around for their work. As per Ebri (2014), he noticed that the line watchers do not get anything like electric lamps, setting up camp beds and other work materials, yet need to rest outside or lease houses that they pay using cash on hand. This underscores the helplessness of personnel of the NIS arising from inefficient administration (Ashiru, 2016).

There are not many outcomes on line foundation because of restricted assets, which thus may prompt the failure of the organization (Nigerian Migration Administration) in satisfying its obligations (Akpeji, 2011; Okadigbo, 2016). A portion of the weaknesses of the Nigerian Movement Administration (NIS) is; Absence of creative reconnaissance advances, distant observing stages to give some examples (Musa, 2013). Adekunle (2013) affirms the prior guarantee that there is a work deficiency in the NIS, which might thwart the fundamental advancement of the assistance in the issues of country states Okunade (2017). In his investigation Viewpoints on Unlawful Courses in Nigeria, imagines that respondents call attention to that because of the tremendous landmass nearby, watch vehicles do not cover everything, making steady air checking inconceivable. Nonetheless, Nigerian migration authorities are restricted in their job, as this help do not have reconnaissance airplanes to play out this job adequately and proficiently. Furthermore, the job of the Workplace is to guarantee the sufficient acquisition of hardware, for example, watch for vehicles, bikes, weapons, and ammo, required for powerful security strategy, yet shockingly, the Workplace cannot do this.

Conclusion

Lack of sophisticated equipment, patrol vehicles and skilled manpower can force tourists to cross the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) with fake documents (Okpanku, 2001). Due to limited resources, there are several consequences on Border Infrastructure, which in turn could cause Exxon to fulfil the responsibilities of the Agency (Nigerian Immigration Service) (Akpeji, 2011 and Okadigo, 2016). The Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) has some drawbacks; Lacking innovative surveillance technology remote monitoring platforms to name a few (Moses, 2013). Adekunle (2013) reiterates the previous claim that there is a shortage of manpower in the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), which hinders the required progress in the affairs of these countries. Okunade (2017). In his study "Perspectives on Illegal Roads in Nigeria" in the opinion of the respondent, said that due to a large amount of land in the area, patrol vehicles cannot cover all of them, so continuous air monitoring is not feasible. However, Nigerian immigration officials are limited in their primary role, as there is no surveillance aircraft to perform their roles effectively and efficiently in this service. In addition, the role of the office is to ensure the procurement of adequate equipment such as patrol vehicles, motorcycles, weapons and ammunition required for effective security policing.

Recommendations

In the light of the aforementioned issues, the researcher recommends that Nigeria immigration service cannot be solely responsible for the prevention of cross border human trafficking it should liaise and network with other sister security departments;

this is equally important to fill intelligence gaps, minimize costs of intelligence collection, and establish diplomatic relations among states.

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