

# Modern Slavery in the Hausa-folk: Traces from the Hausa Home Videos

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**Abstract:** - The notions of slave and slavery still reverberate global history of mankind which might have apparently left Africans in disadvantaged positions. Besides, these might have allowed substantial repositions and/or redistributions of wealth of the people of African descent. These activities might also have resulted in human displacements across geographical locations obviously changing identities of the victims. The reasons above might tend to locate the notions of slave and slavery in the past but recent phenomena reflected in a variety of literature suggest and present a persistence of slavery shaped in multiple forms. This paper traces the phenomenon of slavery in selected Hausa Home Videos and identifies its status and nature in the Hausa-folk tradition. The videos perceive the notions of slave and slavery through a variety of elements such as proverbs and idioms. Equally important, the paper interrogates the notions of slave and slavery and shows how and probably wonders why the new meaning in Hausa Home Videos. The paper further situates some of the characters as slaves and how their experiences shape their slavery. Moreover, the paper goes further to consider some acts as modern slavery; these include human trafficking, political persuasion and domination amongst others. The paper concludes and suggests education in its most basic form as armour against oppression, domination, slavery and its attendant factors.

**Keywords:** Slave, Modern Slavery, Domination, Hausa-folk, Hausa Videos

## I. INTRODUCTION

The current underdevelopment of Nigeria and African countries as a whole could directly or indirectly be linked with slavery activities (Lange, 2004). Unfortunately, slavery still persists, by taking new forms and strategies, the act of which is termed modern slavery. Modern slavery is an emerging global issue that businesses need to be alerted to and be prepared to address (Rio Tinto, 2016). As a cultural, social and economic phenomenon however, the strength of the norms against it is eroding, subject to unscrupulous business conducts, government indifference and indeed political tribulations.

Modern slavery is an existing phenomenon in places including Nigeria, and specifically within the Hausa-folk. A number of Hausa Home Videos reflect this notion. The videos depict various forms of modern slavery showing their negative impact on the economic, social and overall sustainable development of the society in question. This paper concentrates on pinpointing instances of various kinds of modern slavery in the Hausa Home Videos; thereby showing,

indirectly, its nature and effect within the Hausa-folk of the 21st century. Nevertheless, the paper is specifically interested in finding answers to the following questions:

- i. Does modern slavery exist within the Hausa-folk?
- ii. If it does, what is its nature or forms?
- iii. What effect does modern slavery has on the overall sustainable development?

## II. SLAVERY

In the global history, slave and slave trade were formally abolished after the 1807 abolition act. However, slave and slavery have been among of the major topics for history studies. Ade & Okonedes (2010) noted the continual reverberation of the subject to be as a result of magnitude of the human tragedy they represented as well as the continuing relevance of their aftermath in contemporary times. Slavery has been characterized to involve:

- i. Forcing an individual to work through mental or physical threat
- ii. An individual owned or controlled by an employer
- iii. An individual having restrictions on his/her freedom of movement
- iv. Treating an individual as a commodity, which could be sold or bought
- v. Mental and physical abuse (Puma, 2015; AI, 2017).

There were instances when slaves attempted running away. In such cases, the slave(s) owner(s) usually made an announcement describing the slave(s) for possible recall/reclaim. Umaru as quoted by Ferguson (1973: 231) disclosed that, when such slaves were found, they were more often not killed, rather received severe punishments. They would be tired up and seriously humiliated. In such cases, no elder or important person will go to the victims' aid, as running away was a grave offence for a slave.

During slavery age among the Hausa-folk, how slaves responded to their captivity depended upon a number of variables. Paul, (2011) noted some of those variables as follow:

- i. Their positions in the society
- ii. Age
- iii. Gender

- iv. Work regime
- v. Whether the victim was captured or born into slavery
- vi. Proximity between place of slavery and the place of enslavement
- vii. Concentration of slaves who have similar identity, which is likely to give them the opportunity of teaming up.

### III. THE HAUSA HOME VIDEOS

The emergence of Hausa Home Videos, as an aspect of literature however, is indeed an introduction of another mirror from which the society can be viewed. In fact, it is termed *wasankwaikwayo* in Hausa, which is a compounding of two words, the former referring to *play* while the latter *imitation*. As such, it is right to conclude that, the Hausa Home Videos depict the thoughts, feelings, life style and the sum culture of the Hausa alongside the communities they interact with, their (the Hausa Home Videos) deviation from the expected norms notwithstanding.

Danjuma, (2014) holds that, the first drama which took place on earth could be traced back to the time of Adam and Eve. That was when their only two sons had misunderstanding leading to one killing the other. The killer was confused on what to do with the corpse. There and then, two angels descended in form of birds. The two birds fought and one killed the other. The killer instantly dug a hole and buried it (the dead bird). Thereafter, humanity began to imitate such act of burial.

In Nigeria, the first drama was played in 1903 under the directive of Herbert Macaulay (Alfred, 1978; Ali, 2004). That was indeed before the amalgamation of 1914 and the independence of 1960 (Isichei, 1997; Douglas, 2004). Though Hausa Home Videos were well known between 1980 and 1984 (Gidan Dabino, 2001), they were not developed until around 1990 (Fage, 2011). The development was subject to the emergence of three drama groups notably: i. Gwauron Dutse, ii. Karate and iii. Garanya. They produced their first set of dramas viz: *Hukuma Maganin 'Yan Banza* or Criminals are to Face the Law, *'Yan Daukar Amarya* or Bridesmaids, and *Bakar Indiya* or The Black Indian. These dramas were produced by Alhaji Hamisu, Muhammad Gurgu and Sani Lamma, who were also the first Hausa Home Videos' producers (Gidan Dabino, 2001; Ali, 2004).

### IV. TRACES OF SLAVERY IN THE HAUSA HOME VIDEOS: WHAT MATTERS?

Literature and human behavior are mutually interrelated and they influence each other respectively. It is obvious that the influence of literature is indispensable in human's mind. (Shirley, 1969; Helmut & Jurgen, 1991; Sani, 2016). Notwithstanding, literary works are, on the other hand, definitely affected (to some extent) by the central setting of the community (CNRS in Science Daily, 2014). Perhaps, "the central setting of the community, in one way or the other, is likely influenced by the writer's mental power and

experiences. Whatever one might say could then have elements of socio-cultural influence" (Sani, 2016: 9).

### V. MODERN SLAVERY

Though slavery is often assumed to be a thing of the past, the fact is not the way it seems to be. James, (2015) noted that, recent estimates from the international Labour Organization and the Global Slavery Index affirm that, between 20.9 and 35.8 million people are currently trapped in a situation in which one or more other people exercise powers of ownership over them. However, significant percentage of the population are children.

Number of literatures indicating existence of slavery, have recently increased. Junju (2001) considered the western world's enforcement on African counties regarding issues ranging from economic, political as well as sociological, an indirect slavery.

However, various forms of modern slavery have been identified, which could be discussed under the following sub headings:

#### 5.1 Human Trafficking

Trafficked individuals are moved away from their families and homes. They are taken to either a distanced and unknown place within the same country or even different country. Such individuals may end up in forced labor, sexual slavery etc. A trafficked could have either been:

- i. Forcefully abducted,
- ii. Tricked by a trusted friend or family member or
- iii. Deceived by an agency, which promises better life with well-paid job.

An instance of human trafficking is traceable in a Hausa language home video entitled *Safara* (Trafficking). The movie features Ahmad, Indo, Alhaji Ibrahim, Kalisha, Hajiya, Jawal and Hasiraa long side others. Hajiya has gang she manipulates to get beautiful ladies, whom she sells out to Alhaji Ibrahim. The girls are thereafter transported to Dubai and subjected to prostitution.

Alhaji Ibrahim on the other hand deceptively marries Kalisha after he wins her love and that of her family by frequent gifts. He as well deceives a young man Ahmad together with his proposed wife Indo, that they follow him to Dubai, where they will work in a palace. They all (Kalisha, Ahmad and Indo) agree out of ignorance and thirst for riches.

At Dubai, Alhaji Ibrahim hands Kalisha and Indo to his boss, Jawal. They are subjected to prostitution though they show serious resistance. Ahmad remains astonished and doubtful of the situation. He later finds a way to report Alhaji Ibrahim to Nigerian Embassy at Dubai. Consequently, Alhaji Ahmad is arrested alongside Jawal, Harisa as well as Hajiya.

Another instance of this form of modern slavery could be found in the Hausa language home video *Aikatau* (Housemaidship). Girls from villages are entrusted in the hands of Hajiya

Babba who brings them to city in the name of getting them jobs. However, they are subjected to prostitution. It has gone to the extent that some of them, including Mariri converts to full-time prostitute. Thereafter, Hajiya Babba sells Lantana to Baba Karami who sacrifices her for cultism.

### 5.2 Child Abuse

This form of slavery exists when a laborer is below the minimum legal or expected age. Circumstances oblige some young people to have to work for survival. In that manner, they engage in a labor quite beyond their physical and mental situations, thereby having negative impact in their life (physically or psychologically) (Hitman, 2014; AI, 2017). Among the Hausa communities of today, there are three basic reasons resulting to child labor these are:

- a. Almajiri education
- b. Polygamous homes in which a wife died leaving children in the hands of a wicked woman
- c. Being and orphan

A Hausa home video *Basma* shows how a girl named Basma undergoes a sever hardship in the hand of Fati, otherwise Aunty as Basma addresses her. Basma's parents are civil servants who leave the house early morning, only to return in the evening. Fati on the other hand is a housemaid in the hands of whom Basma's care is entrusted.

However, Fati maltreats Basma by constant beating, nagging and assigning her different works. She bathes her with very cold water, which causes her pneumonia. She also threatens her with knife, that she will kill her if she reveals anything that happens.

In another Hausa home video entitled *Dan Almajiri* (Poor Almajiri Boy), Ahmad is subjected to child abuse. His parents are divorced, where each marries and belongs to a new family. They both reject Ahmad who lives a miserable life joining almajiri students. He roams about on streets and begs for food. He remains in the pitiful situation until when a car knocks him down as he tries crossing a road. He is hospitalized and his parents are asked for. That leads the issue to court of law, where Ahmad parents are called to order.

### 5.3 Forced Marriage

Another form of modern slavery is when a girl or woman is forced to marry a certain person without giving her any choice. It could be vice versa in few cases; thus, a person is forced to marry a lady out of necessity. In the marital homes, such wives are usually humiliated and subjected to physical and psychological slave-like situations. ILO, (2017) disclosed that, 15.4 million people were estimated to be living in forced marriage as of 2016. Out of the number, about 6.5 million occurred between 2012 and 2015, which perhaps 88% of the victims are women. This indeed shows the persistence of the cases of forced marriages.

A Hausa home video entitled *Tawakkali* (Faith) is a good instance of forced marriage as modern slavery. Tani, the

heroine has a lover named Ado. However, her uncle forces her to marry Alhaji Sambo, a man whom she dislikes. Tani is left without option but obeys her uncle out of necessity.

*Sai Na Kashe Mijina* (I Shall Kill My Husband) is another instance of forced marriage. Jamila is forced to marry Bello, after which there has never been peace in the family. She creates all sorts of controversies so that Bello divorces her. She disappoints him in public and when ever he has visitors at home. She often promises killing him. One day, she starves him with a knife and leaves the house thinking that Bello is dead. Bello on the other hand manages to crawl out of the house seeking assistance. He is taken to hospital immediately. In the hospital, Jamila yet attempts killing him before he regains consciousness. She fails and leaves to her old lover.

### 5.4 Sexual Slavery

This is when an individual is kept mainly in restricted place and subjected to sexual molestations a long side other threatening acts. Females are usually the victims of sexual slavery, though, young boys sometimes are the victims too.

An instance of sexual slavery is traceable in the Hausa home video entitled *Dijangala*. Rabi'u, the major male character, comes from an influential family. He has a garden in a village where Rabi'u visits frequently to supervise its activities. He suddenly develops sexual lust towards a girl name Dijangala in the village, who is the major female character of the film.

On the other hand, an uncle to Dijangala and under whose care she is, works in the garden under Rabi'u's supervision. Noticing who Dijangala is to her uncle, Rabi'u requests that she works in the garden's office as a cleaner. Dijangala's uncle agrees and introduces her to the garden. Rabi'u uses that opportunity and rapes Dijangala.

### 5.5 Non-access to Education and Socialization

Depriving minority groups access to education (by whatever means, such as proximity, inconsideration, and discrimination among others), is indirectly subjecting them to socio-economic and indeed educational inequality (Yabo, 2009; Umar, & Illo, 2014). They remain victims of discrimination from access to political and other socio-economic benefits. The only remedy to the situation is by providing educational means to their teaming population. If education is properly given to them (the minority groups), they will fully be integrated into main stream of the Nigerian society (Abu-Ubaida *et al*, 2017<sup>2</sup>). The educational situation, especially at rural areas, is uncommendable. Problem of over population, inadequate teaching and leaning materials, poor laboratories and libraries, inadequate qualified teacher and inadequate welfare of teachers are among problems of education (Masello, 2014; Abu-Ubaida, *et al*, 2017<sup>1</sup>). However, this is indirectly denying the victim population access to education.

In a Hausa home video entitled *Hedimasta* (Headmaster), an instance of this form of modern slavery is traceable. It features a village with absolute illiteracy. The teachers who are sent to

the village's school lack knowledge of the subject matter not to talk of pedagogics. In fact, they are themselves, illiterate. Consequently, barbarism looms the village.

### 5.6 Bonded Labor

Originally, this is a situation where a person is forced to work as a means of payment for a loan. It is also known as *debt bondage*. In such cases, the laborer only receives food and shelter after working harder than normalcy. However, this type of modern slavery is rare, if at all, in the Hausa-folk. Yet, there is a similar situation of *barantaka*. *Barantaka* is a situation in which an individual known as *bara* works for an influential person for a reward of which could only suffice the individual food and shelter. Such individuals never have chances in life. The person's family will grow up in same situation for the fact that, the children would have no means to education (Harees, 2012).

However, there are other forms of slavery, which are not common in the Hausa-folk. They include

- a. *Forced Labor*: It is an instance in which individuals, groups, political parties or even government recruit people illegally to work against their (victims') wish. They usually receive little or no pay for their services. They are sometimes even violated or given punishments.
- b. *Descent-Based Slavery*: This type of slavery has to do with ethnic, tribal or religious groups in a society. It is a situation whereby a group is considered valueless and thus, fits to be responsible for all slave-like works.

However, in a speech during the *Make Poverty History Campaign* at UK (2005), Mandela said:

*Like apartheid and poverty, slavery is not natural. It is man-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings.* (Mandela, 2005)

James, (2015) noted that, the campaigns by organizations and indeed government against modern slavery have been more of mouth talks than taking coordinated steps for its total eradication.

## VI. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In accordance with the information obtained by the study, the following are its major findings:

- i. Modern slavery still exists within the Hausa-folk.
- ii. Modern slavery within the Hausa-folk is of different forms, which include, child labor, forced marriage, human trafficking, nonaccess to education and socialization and sexual slavery.
- iii. Modern slavery has significant negative effect on the overall sustainable development of the community in question.

## VI. DISCUSSIONS OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Instances of the existence of modern slavery within the Hausa-folk could be traced in various Hausa Home Videos. Such videos showcase the reflection of, among other, the cultures, norms, beliefs and in deed the activities going on within the society. This argument is inline with the assertions of Shirley, (1969); Helmut & Jurgen, (1991) and Sani, (2016), who believed that, humans' thoughts and beliefs within a given society are the building blocks of the literary works of such societies.

Modern slavery within the Hausa-folk takes divergent dimensions. One of such is human trafficking, which has been exemplified from two Hausa Home Videos. *Safara* (Trafficking) has taken us through a situation in which girls are transported to other counties after which they are subjected to prostitution. The victims are mostly deceived by promises of job opportunities and riches. Others are victims of abduction. Similarly, girls are brought from villages to cities in the name of housemaid services. Whereas, the real objective is to put them into prostitution.

Instances of child abuse as a form of modern slavery have been given from *Basma* and *Dan Alamajiri* (Poor Almajiri Boy) respectively. In the former, Basma suffers child abuse in the hands of the housemaid. This is a challenge to working mothers of today who entrusted the care of their children in the hands of housemaid(s). These children are denied parental care. They grow up without the basic life orientations. In the later, Ahmad undergoes similar situation subject to divorce between his parents. Indeed, divorce has been one of the major factors that situation children into hardship and helpless conditions as noted by Sani & Tsaure, (2017).

Forced marriage is another form of modern slavery within the Hausa-folk. The Hausa language home video *Tawakkali* (Faith) showcases this situation by presenting Tani as a victim of forced marriage. She suffers psychological unrest of higher extent, which is a problem to human health. Similarly, Jamila is forced to marry Bello, in *Sai Na KasheMijina* (I Shall Kill My Husband); the situation which leads to many of Jamila's attempts of killing him. Forced marriage is indeed a disastrous act, which leaves the victims in depression and anxiety. That could make them capable of going to any length to exit the union. In 2017, various cases involving forced marriage victims killing their husbands were recorded within the Hausa-folk in Northern Nigeria.

Furthermore, sexual slavery is another form of modern slavery, which causes depression of higher extent to the victims. During the recent years, cases of rape in Northern and Southern Nigeria are becoming more alarming. As the victims are usually female, some of them are lured or deceived with riches; while others are forcefully raped. A picture of this form of slavery is depicted in *Dijangala*.

Moreso, non-access to education is another form of modern slavery. It has been an issue among the Hausa-folk especially

as a result of almajiri education. Almajiri students are usually children from poor families taken to schools (almajiri schools), that lack systematic organization and planning. They are left without proper guidance and basic orientations for the children of their ages. On the other hand, government's effort on educational development (especially in rural areas) is below average. A good picture of such situation is given in *Hedimaster* (Headmaster). As noted by Masello, (2014) and Abu-Ubaida *et al*, (2017<sup>1</sup>), schools in the village are usually faced with mass problems ranging from poor infrastructures, unqualified and inadequate teachers as well as inadequate teaching materials among others.

However, bonded labor, otherwise known as *barantaka* in the Hausa language, is another causative factor to nonaccess to education. This is because, the victim and his family only manage to make ends meet, thus cannot afford extra expenses on educational pursuit.

Therefore, the negative effects of modern slavery could be summarized as follow:

- i. Repositioning and population redistribution, as in the case of human trafficking
- ii. Hopeless society with high rate of unemployment resulting from noneducation and inadequate or nonparental care, orientation and upbringing
- iii. Increase in criminal acts within the society as a result of high rate of unemployment and illiteracy
- iv. Decline in foreign investment and tourism resulting from non-confidence on the safety of life and property
- v. Increase in poverty
- vi. Increase in corruption

## VII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Though slavery may be a notion of the past, its existence today (21<sup>st</sup> century) is obvious. However, it has taken new forms and dimensions, which indeed camouflage the practices leaving researchers with no option but term it *modern slavery*. There have been campaigns by governments and organizations for the eradication or at least pushing back the practices to the minimum level; not with standing, that have been more of say than action. Nevertheless, modern slavery is a phenomenon that needs urgent attention for peaceful co-existence and overall development of every community. Hence, it is a treat to peace as well as social and economic developments. The following were suggested based on the findings of the study:

- i. Education shall be a matter of priority to the government. This will reduce modern slavery victimizations subject to vulnerabilities resulting from ignorance.
- ii. There shall be impartiality and nontolerance to corruption in dealing with cases relating to modern slavery.

- iii. Community based organizations as well as traditional and religious leaders should be incorporated to work alongside government agencies in sorting out and dealing with cases of modern slavery. In line with this, there should be orientations by the bodies aforementioned, which could serve as enlightenments against ignorance of modern slavery.

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