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Migration of Africans and the Challenges of Modern Slave Trade, Refugees, and Human Security in Libya

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Abstract
The challenges of modern slavery and the rising crises of refugees in Libya have attracted global reactions with their attendant negative implications for human security. This study explores the complex experiences of African migrants in Libya, examining the multifaceted challenges they encounter, including the modern slave trade, refugee crises, and human security threats. The study adopts a qualitative approach in which secondary data was sourced from textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, government reports, scholarly articles, internet sources, newspapers, and documentaries on victim testimony. The content method of data analysis was utilised to ensure thorough reading and coding to identify emerging themes and patterns. The study was anchored on the push and pull theory of Lee's migration to examine the subject matter under study. The study discovered the factors that necessitated modern slavery and the high rate of refugees in Libya to bad leadership and governance in part of some African States, war, conflict, violence, and persecution in neighbouring African countries; political and economic crises facing most African countries; level of insecurity and instability in Libya; racism-rooted culture, among others. Also, the study discovers the implications of modern slavery and refugees on human security to be Forced labour, human rights violations, sexual exploitation, organ harvesting, reports of enslavement, torture, and abuse, extortion and ransom demands, limited access to asylum procedures and refugee status, deportation, and repatriation to countries of origin, among others. The study concludes that, in line with human security discourse, the global community is responsible for ensuring all human beings are protected irrespective of their status in any part of the world they migrated to. The study recommended that African states should prioritise education, skills development, and job creation to address the skills mismatch and unemployment driving migration, and governments of African states should establish a multidisciplinary task force to address the push factors driving migration, including poverty, inequality, and political instability, among others.

Keywords: Displacement, Human Trafficking, Migration, Modern Slave Trade, Refugee

Introduction

The activities of the transatlantic slave trade occurred with the collaboration of African slave merchants. It happened within the broader system of trade between West and Central Africa, Western Europe, and North and South America (Boston, 2022). In the slave port in Africa, the Europeans exchanged clothes, guns, beads, ammunition, and materials, among others, with captured Africans that were brought to the port by African traders (MSF, 2017). Some of these slaves were captured during tribal war among Africans and others from interior African land when the trade began to expand. During this period, the population of Africans was highly decimated because millions of them were forcefully removed from their homes, villages, and towns. Many African slaves were thrown overboard during the voyage to Europe, and some died in horrendous conditions in the plantation camps (Patton, 2017).

The practice of slave trade in the 21st century is antithetical to modern civilization. Between the 16th and 19th centuries, there was a transatlantic slave trade practice where millions of Africans were bundled together like people in refugee camps and transported to America and Europe for agricultural labour in cash crop plantations to produce for national and international markets (Boston, 2022). However, the slave trade was abolished on May 1, 1807, following the legislation that was passed in both the Commons and the Lords, which brought an end to Britain's involvement in the trade, in particular the Atlantic slave trade, and also encouraged British action to persuade other European states to abolish the practice (Boston, 2022). The bill received royal assent, and the trade was made illegal. This made it illegal for the British to trade in enslaved people in any part of the world. The United States was another major power involved in the Atlantic slave trade; Congress passed the comparable Act prohibiting the importation of slaves, taking effect on January 18, 1808 (Anderson, 2023).

The transatlantic slave trade is largely exclusive to the past, but modern forms of slavery and human trafficking continue to exist in the current era of civilization. Given this, attention around the globe has been drawn to the reality of the modern-day slave trade in Libya (Patton, 2017). It was alleged that some African migrants were caught in the web of these slave trade anomalies as merchants or victims. Pictures of a refugee camp in Libya also broke through the internet in 2017 where Africans were sold like commodities in total violation of the refugee convention (MSF, 2017). Apart from the slaves being used as labourers in crop plantations, others were used as domestic staff and artisans, with their attendant dehumanising conditions, like in some refugee camps in Africa (McGuire & Coelho, 2020). The slaveholders normally force the slaves to work with inadequate feeding and keep them under unsanitary conditions, which often make them susceptible to sickness and terminal diseases (McGuire & Coelho, 2020).

In the 16th century, Africans were forcibly taken away as slaves, a brutal practice that exploited and oppressed them. In contrast, in the 21st century, Africans are making conscious choices to migrate to Europe and America, either through legal channels or irregular means, often driven by their aspirations or influenced by various factors such as economic opportunities, education, or family ties (Nunn, 2017). Several push-pull factors necessitated this compulsive travel outside Africa with the belief system that life offers the best in Europe while it is very difficult to succeed in Africa (EJI, 2022). Based on this desperate move, many Africans use illegal routes through Libya to connect with the Mediterranean Sea, and from there, they sail to Europe (Anene, Njoku & Theodore, 2019). Sadly, many end up as refugees in Libya or as slaves.

The savagery issue of modern slavery and how

refugees are treated in Libya is adjudged to be returning to the 16th century (Patton, 2017). Libya is a sovereign African state in the Maghreb region of North Africa, bordered by the Mediterranean Sea to the north, Egypt to the east, Sudan to the southeast, Chad and Niger to the south, and Algeria and Tunisia to the west (MSF, 2017). As a result of the strategic location of this country, which enables illegal migrants to travel through the Mediterranean Sea to Europe on boats, many African youths struggling for greener pastures normally fall victim to slave merchants in Libya (Boston, 2022). The subject of the modern slave trade in Libya is a reminder of the barbarism perpetrated by Europeans during the transatlantic slave trade (EJI, 2022). The escalation of conflict in the country during the fall of the Gaddafi regime has contributed to the boom of this shadow economy. This development is an aberration in modern human civilisation, and it has generated concern all over the world (Anene, Njoku & Theodore, 2019). Since the world has become a global village and there is an interrelationship and interconnectedness among diverse actors in the world, several reactions have been generated on what has been tagged "Modern slave trade in Libya" (Patton, 2017).

While there is a growing body of research on the migration of Africans to Europe, there is a significant gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by African migrants in Libya, particularly about the modern slave trade and refugee crises. Existing studies have primarily focused on the broader trends and patterns of African migration, without adequately exploring the nuances of the Libyan context about human security. Furthermore, the literature on modern slave trade and human trafficking has largely overlooked the Libyan context, despite growing reports of exploitation and abuse of African migrants in the country. Based on this, this study tends to investigate factors that necessitate the modern slave trade and the high rate of refugees in Libya and their effects.

Conceptual Analysis

Modern Salve trade

Farley (2018) contends that there are misconceptions about slavery in the world today because the majority of people perceive that the slave trade (Trans-Atlantic slave trade) has been abolished but modern slavery captures the nuances of slavery in the 21st century. Modern slaves may be referred to as persons who are owned by another person and the people who claim ownership are in total control of where those people who are owned live, work, and move among others (Farley 2018). Modern slave trade is the business or process of procuring, transporting, and selling slaves, especially vulnerable people or people who can be easily tricked in this contemporary era. Also, the act of selling human beings as commodities to buyers which eventually engaged them in hard labour, domestic help or other inhuman purposes in the modern era can be termed modern slavery (Anti-Slavery International 2024).

Anti-Slavery International (2024) argued that there are about fifty million people trapped in modern slavery throughout the world today. The term modern slavery is seen as when an individual is exploited by others, for personal or commercial gain; whether tricked, coerced, or forced, they lose their freedom (Anti-Slavery International, 2024). This includes but is not limited to human trafficking, forced labour, Child slavery, forced and early marriage, domestic servitude, descent-based slavery (where people are born into slavery) and debt bondage among others (IOM, 2024). Victims of modern slavery might face violence or threats, be forced into inescapable debt, or have their passports seized and face being threatened with deportation. Many people have fallen into this trap because they were trying to escape poverty or insecurity, improve their lives and support their families i.e. People can be particularly

vulnerable to modern slavery when external circumstances push them into making risky decisions in search of opportunities to better their lives. Modern slavery is the very antithesis of social justice and sustainable development (IOM, 2024).

Migration

IOM (2024) asserted that though there is no universally accepted definition of migration at the international level, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provides a comprehensive definition: migration encompasses any movement of people, regardless of length, composition, or causes, within a state (internal migration) or across international borders (international migration). This broad definition covers various forms of migration, including voluntary and forced migration, long-term and short-term migration, and different motives such as political persecution, conflicts, economic problems, environmental degradation, or family reunification. It also includes the migration of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and those moving for other purposes, regardless of their legal status or means of migration (IOM) (2024).

Abimiku (2020) contends that migration is a fundamental human activity, where individuals or groups move from one place of residence to another, whether within a country or across international borders. This phenomenon has been a part of human history, with people relocating from their family homes to their own homes, between regions, cities, towns, and countries (Adepoju 2017). Migration involves a change of residence, either within a state or across borders, and has recently become a critical political and policy issue. The challenges associated with migration include integration, displacement, ensuring safe migration, and effective border management (Cirillo, Cattaneo, Miller & Sadiddin 2022).

Teye (2022) contends that migration, in a broad sense, refers to the process of moving from one place to another, involving a change of residence. He further argues that migration can be categorized into two main types: internal migration, which occurs within a country, and international migration, which involves crossing state boundaries and staying in the host country for a minimum period. Cirillo, Cattaneo, Miller & Sadiddin (2022), opined that internal migration encompasses various types of moves, such as rural-urban migration, also known as urbanization, and movements between districts or provinces within a country. Tsegay (2023) asserted that international migration, on the other hand, involves relocating to a new country which is the main focus of this study. In the process of Africans especially youths migrating to Europe, which could be legal or illegal; regular or irregular; some of them end up in Libya because they want to pass through the Mediterranean Sea (Adepoju 2017). Irregular migration is the movement of persons to a new place of residence or transit that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries while regular migration is within the regulatory norms. legal migration is by the applicable legal framework while illegal is outside the framework. Nevertheless, whichever way a person migrates, there is still a provision for fundamental human rights protection (Tsegay 2023).

Refugees

According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is someone who has a genuine fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, social group, or political beliefs and has fled their home country as a result (Adeola 2016). This person is unable or unwilling to seek protection from their home country due to this fear. In addition, regional laws in Africa and the Americas have expanded this definition to include individuals who have been forced to leave their country due to various forms of violence, human rights violations, or extreme disturbances to public order, such as war,

occupation, or widespread human rights abuses (UNHCR 2024). Thus, a crucial criterion to be identified as a refugee is crossing an international border (ILA 2020). Persons forcibly displaced from their homes who cannot or choose not to cross a border, therefore, are not considered refugees, even if they share many of the same circumstances and challenges as those who do (Aboh and Ubom 2021). Unlike refugees, internally displaced people do not have a special status in international law with rights specific to their situation (ILA 2020).

However, not all refugees are forced to flee their home country due to fear of persecution or violence. Many Africans leave their countries in search of economic opportunity through irregular or illegal means and end up as refugees in another country (Adeola 2021). Before embarking on this journey, many sold their properties and others borrowed money with the hope that fortune would smile at them abroad. In both categories whether forced to flee or voluntary, many leave with little more than the clothes on their backs, having lost their homes, possessions, and loved ones as the case may be (Mbiyozo 2023). They may have suffered human rights abuses or witnessed traumatic events in the process of migration. Today, there are 35.3 million refugees globally, with the UNHCR mandated to protect 29.4 million and millions more in need of international protection (Adeola 2022).

Adeola (2021) contends that countries only accept refugees if they can prove that their fear of persecution is legitimate. Moreover, the United States considers a refugee a person situated in a country that is not the U.S., a person whom the U.S. considers to be of special humanitarian concern, or someone who has faced or may face persecution in their home country. Therefore, if the push factor that caused Africans to migrate toward Libya is persecution or other related reasons; they should be protected by the Libya government (UNHCR 2024). African Migrants turning to refugees in Libya without protection as specified by the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol or the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention is an aberration (ILA 2020).

The United Nations New York Declaration Refugees and Migrants emphasizes that all migrants, regardless of their status, possess inherent rights that must be respected and protected. Member States have committed to ensuring access to essential services like education, healthcare, justice, and language training for all migrants, with a focus on integration and inclusion (ILA 2020). States have obligations to uphold the human rights of all migrants within their jurisdiction, including those in irregular situations. This includes respecting, protecting, and fulfilling their economic, social, and cultural rights, such as access to healthcare, housing, and education (UNHCR 2024). These rights are essential for promoting social inclusion and enabling migrants to lead productive and fulfilling lives. States must acknowledge the presence of migrants and allow them to claim their rights, regardless of their status. Thus, visibility must be increased, along with responses that provide durable solutions for African refugees (Mbiyozo 2023).

Legal and policy issues on Refugees, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol established the foundation for refugee protection, defining the term "refugee" and outlining their rights and international standards for protection. The core principle of non-refoulement ensures refugees are not returned to countries where they face serious threats (Adeola 2022). The Convention sets minimum standards for refugee treatment, including housing, work, and education rights, enabling dignified and independent lives (Osimen, Apeloko & Awogu-Maduagwu 2023). It also defines refugees' obligations to host countries and excludes certain individuals from refugee status. The Convention specifies

legal obligations for States that are party to these instruments, providing crucial protection for vulnerable refugees (Adeola 2021).

After World War I, millions sought refuge, prompting governments to establish international agreements for travel documents. World War II led to a surge in forced displacement and the international community responded by developing guidelines, laws, and conventions to protect the rights and dignity of those fleeing conflict and persecution. This process began in 1921 and culminated in the 1951 Convention, which expanded on previous instruments and provided the most comprehensive international codification of refugee rights (Adeola 2022).

Meanwhile, the legal instrument for modern slavery and trafficking is the Palermo Protocol, also known as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000 and entered into force in 2003 (ILO 2017). The Palermo Protocol is a supplement to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and defines trafficking in persons as: "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for exploitation (ILA 2020).

There have been several efforts in combating modern slavery and trafficking from the global community, with several key conventions and treaties aiming to eradicate these practices in 2003 (ILO 2017). The Slavery Convention (1926) initially aimed to abolish slavery and the slave trade globally, which was then built upon by the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery (1956) to also address related practices in 2003 (ILO 2017). Furthering this progress, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 29 on Forced Labour (1930) prohibited forced labour, including slavery, servitude, and debt bondage. Later, the ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999) specifically targeted the eradication of the worst forms of child labour, including slavery, trafficking, and hazardous work 2003 (ILO 2017). Most recently, the Council of Europe's Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2005) has prevented and combated human trafficking, protected victims, and prosecuted traffickers. Together, these conventions and treaties have formed a comprehensive framework to combat slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking globally (Adeola 2023).

Material and Area of Study

Area of Study

Libya, a North African country, serves as a significant area of study for the topic of migration of Africans and the challenges of the modern slave trade and refugees. Its strategic location as a gateway between Africa and Europe makes it a critical transit point for migrants seeking to reach Europe. The country's porous borders, political instability, and lack of effective governance have created an environment conducive to human smuggling and trafficking. Libya is situated on the coast of North Africa and is the fourth largest country on the continent. It borders with Egypt in the east, Sudan in the southeast, Chad and Niger in the south, Algeria to the west and Tunisia in the northwest the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Libya forms part of the North African plateau extending from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. The highest point is 10,335 ft, a peak in the extreme south. The main geographical areas are Tripolitania, Cyrenaica, and Fezzan with major cities like Benghazi, and Misrata.

Fig 1.1: Libya Map



Source: *Africaguide.com (n.d).*

Methodology

This study employed a desk review methodology, involving a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing data from various sources. A systematic search of academic journals, books, government reports, policy documents, online resources, and grey literature was conducted to identify relevant sources. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to select and collect sources that met the research objectives. The collected data was then analysed and synthesised through a thematic analysis, comparing and contrasting findings to identify patterns, themes, and trends. The quality and validity of sources were evaluated, and the findings were interpreted in line with the research objectives. This desk review approach enabled a comprehensive examination of existing data, providing a foundation for further research and informing policy and practice.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is anchored on Lee's Migration Theory, also known as the Push and Pull Theory. The theory was developed by Everett Spurgeon Lee, Professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia (Lee 1966). Lee first presented his seminal work, "A Theory of Migration", in 1966 and is a widely recognized theoretical framework used to explain the patterns and processes of migration within and between societies (Parkins 2010; Heller & Pécoud 2020). Lee's theory seeks to understand the factors influencing migration decisions and the consequences of migration for both the sending and receiving areas (Bhende & Kanitkar 2013; Lee 2020). The theory comprises four main components: push factors, pull factors, intervening obstacles and personal factors. According to Lee, Push factors are associated with the area of origin i.e. things that are unfavourable about the area that one lives in e.g. lack of employment, few opportunities, primitive conditions, desertification, famine or drought, political fear or persecution, slavery or forced labour, poor medical care, loss of wealth, natural disasters, death threats, lack of political or religious freedom, discrimination, Civil War among others (Parkins 2010, Lee 2020). Pull factors are associated with the area of destination i.e. things that attract one to another area e.g. job opportunities, better living conditions, political or religious freedom, enjoyment, quality education, better medical care, development and modern society, security and safety, industralisation and technology innovation among others (Anene, Njoku & Theodore, 2019).

Lee further explained that Intervening Obstacles are the barriers or challenges that migrants may encounter during their journey from the area of origin to the area of destination (Bhende & Kanitkar 2013). These obstacles could be physical like natural barriers e.g. mountains, bodies of water or topography; legal, e.g., immigration policies and restrictions; economic, e.g., cost of migration; cultural, e.g., language barriers, or social, e.g., discrimination against migrants in the destination area. Intervening obstacles can influence the decision-making process of migrants and may alter the final destination of their migration (Lee 2020). Finally, personal factors which are the decision to migrate from the place of origin to the place of destination

depend on an individual's perception of the 'pull and push forces' which influence actual migration. He categorises these forces into "pluses" and "minuses" respectively. In other words, pluses are pull factors and minuses are push factors. In between them are "zeros" which balance the competing forces. According to Lee, it is the personal factors such as age, sex, race, level of education, awareness, and intelligence among others along with the pull-push factors and intervening obstacles that determine migration (Heller & Pécoud 2020).

Relevance of the theory to the subject matter

The push-pull theory is very apt in analysing the subject matter because the majority of the migrants that fall victim to the slave trade in Libya or end up in refugee camps are Africans, especially Nigerians who are finding better lives outside their place of origin. The level of poverty, unemployment, hunger and starvation in the majority of African countries i.e. the place of origin is very high therefore majority of the youths from these places thought it wise to risk their life through illegal means to find their way to Europe for employment. However, the intervening obstacles to moving through Libya and connecting to the Mediterranean Sea are very high; the culture, language barrier, boat mishap on the high sea, pirates, slave merchants, and racism among others. The criminal gangs that specialise in kidnapping migrants for ransom or other nefarious purposes are waiting for unsuspecting migrants to be their victims. The decision of an individual to embark on such a journey depends on his or her awareness and if the risk is worth taking. Often many Africans are lured with the promise of jobs, education, good life among others in Europe and since they are not aware of the reality of the receiving place; the promise may turn out to be a trap by selling the victim of such deception into slavery or prostitution. There are cases of victims of such deception escaping from their captors and ending up in refugee camps in Libya.

Empirical review

Political Power Struggle After Gadaffi

Libya's strategic location in the Mediterranean makes it a critical geopolitical player, with a vast territory spanning nearly 2,000 kilometres of coastline (Barbour, Fowler, Brown, Buru & Cordell 2024). This positioning has transformed the country into a key transit point for hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees seeking to reach Europe. The oil-rich country with an ancient history has been known for the 42 years of rule of the mercurial Col. Muammar Gaddafi and the Chaos that followed his departure. Libya was under foreign rule for centuries until it gained independence in 1951 (Bradley, Fraihat & Mzioudet 2016). Col. Gaddafi seized power in 1969 and ruled for four decades until he was toppled in 2011 following an armed rebellion assisted by Western military intervention. The population of Libya is about 6.4 million, the Area is 1.77 million 5q km (685,524 5q miles), Arabic is the major Language and Islam is the major religion (Barbour, Fowler, Brown, Buru & Cordell 2024). Libyan dinar is the currency used in Libya (Rowan 2019). The topping of long-term leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 led to a power vacuum and instability with no authority in full control. The National Transitional Council (NTC), a rebel leadership council which had fought to oust the Gaddafi government, declared Libya liberated in October 2011 and took over the running of the country (Barbour, Fowler, Brown, Buru & Cordell 2024; BBC News 2016).

Libya's political landscape has been marred by fragmentation and rivalry between two governments since the overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011, which created a power vacuum and political instability. In 2014, the House of Representatives (HoR) was elected, but the Government of National Unity (GNU) refused to recognize it, setting the stage for a prolonged power struggle. The GNU was formed in Tripoli in 2015, backed by the United

Nations and supported by Turkey and Qatar, while the HoR, backed by the Libyan National Army (LNA), established a rival government in Tobruk in 2016. Despite the international community recognizing the GNU as the legitimate government in 2021, the HoR continued to challenge its authority, leading to renewed fighting between the GNU and HoR forces in Tripoli in 2022. The political landscape was further complicated in 2022 when the HoR established the Government of National Stability (GNS) in Benghazi, solidifying the divide between the two governments.

Libya's divided governance system is plagued by conflict and competing interests, perpetuating a cycle of violence. In 2022, clashes resumed between the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Government of National Stability (GNS) in Tripoli, with the GNS emerging as a rival entity despite being deemed illegitimate by the GNU. The internationally recognized GNU, backed by Turkey, and the GNS, supported by the House of Representatives and the Libyan National Army, have been embroiled in a power struggle. The conflict escalated on August 27, 2022, and reignited in August 2023. Amidst the civil war, a devastating disaster struck in September 2023 when two dams collapsed in Derna, Cyrenaica, resulting in thousands of fatalities. The political instability and armed conflict have had disastrous consequences for both Libyans and migrants. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), between January 1 and November 25, 2023, 947 people were found dead and 1,256 went missing at sea on the central Mediterranean migration route after departing from Libya.

As of April 2023, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported 705,746 migrants and 50,986 registered asylum seekers and refugees as of October 2023. In July 2023, Tunisian security forces forcibly expelled over 900 African migrants and asylum seekers to a remote buffer zone at the Tunisia-Libya border, leaving them vulnerable to human rights violations. Of these, more than 150 individuals were transferred to Libya, where they faced arbitrary detention and deportation. In August 2023, Libyan authorities reported recovering at least 27 bodies in the border area since the expulsions began. Additionally, between January and November 25, 2023, Libyan forces intercepted or rescued 15,057 migrants and asylum seekers attempting to cross the Mediterranean, returning them to Libya, where they faced inhumane detention conditions, forced labour, torture, and other forms of exploitation, according to the IOM and the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM).

Modern Slavery in Libya's Refugee Camps

According to (Malaika 2017) explained that CNN's expose revealing video footage of men being sold at a slave auction in Libya has begun to capture the world's attention. Modern slavery had been a problem long before the video footage was released. Malaika, further stated that African migrants and refugees, particularly women and children, being abused and forced into labour and prostitution in Libya made rounds in mainstream media as early as February 2017. Simmons (2017) opined that 89 million people have been forced into some form of modern slavery over the past five years in the world. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (2017) reports that sub-Saharan Africans are being sold and bought in open markets in Libya. And in Italy, dozens of men and women from East and West Africa recently arrived in Sicily from Libya. Some of these men and women recounted extreme acts of cruelty at the hands of human smugglers, members of the Libyan coastguard, state-run detention centre workers and locals (Izza 2017).

Patton (2017), stated that west African migrants smuggled into Libya are being traded

and sold at what witnesses have described as modern-day slave markets. Survivors who could either escape or buy their freedom told the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) that the trade was so commonplace; that it took place in open public spaces. Mohammed Abdiker, IOM's head of operation and emergencies told Newsweek that the situation is dire and the latest reports of slave markets for migrants can be added to a list of outrages in Libya. He added that the IOM engages inside Libya, the more we learn that it is a vale of tears for all too many migrants. IOM (2021) contends that the slave trade works by preying on the tens of thousands of vulnerable people who risk everything to get to Libya's coast and then across the Mediterranean into Europe a route that was been described as the deadliest route on Earth. Libya is the main gateway for people attempting to reach Europe by sea, with more than 150,000 people making the crossing in each of the past three years (Anti-Slavery International 2024).

ACCORD (2019) further contends that modern-day slavery is widespread around the world and Libya is by no means unique. But what is particularly shocking is that this is happening attentively in the open, where people can go to a farmhouse, place a bid and end up owning a human being. The refugees in Libya are from several African countries in an attempt to flee from poverty, war, and unemployment in their countries. They prefer to take the tough journey through the desert and have paid people (Smugglers) to get to Libya to cross the Mediterranean to Europe (ACCORD 2019). The International Organization for Migration says trade in humans has become so normalized that people are being bought and sold in public for as little as $ 400 (IOM 2017).

Image Collections from the Study Area

Fig 1.2: Europe-bound illegal migrants held in Gheryan, Libya detention camp (Dec 2016).



Source: Amara (2016) Reuters photojournalist in Libya .

Fig 1.3: Illegal immigrants in a detention centre in Zawiyah, Libya on June 17, 2017.



Source: Taha Jawashi (2017) —AFP/Getty Images.

Fig 1.4: African migrants trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea.



Source: Óglaigh Na Héireann (2016).

Fig 1.5: Human rights organisations documented violent abuse against migrants in detention centres in Libya.



Source: [File: Hazem Turkia/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images]. Published On 4 Oct 20214 Oct 2021.

Factors That Necessitated Modern Slave Trade and high rate of refugees in Libya

The slave trade in Libya is been fueled by some factors and some of these factors shall be discussed as follows:

1. ***Failure on the part of some African States:*** The history of corruption, underdevelopment, poor governance and leadership in some African States made some citizens of such countries lose hope in the government of their country to provide them with good jobs and meaningful existence as forced them to migrate to Libya for them to cross to Europe through the Mediterranean Sea and by so doing some of them end up in slave market in Libya (Pecoraro 2012).

2. ***War, Conflict, violence, and Persecution in Neighbouring African Countries:*** One of the significant causes of modern slavery and refugees in Libya is the issue of conflict and violence in neighbouring African countries, particularly in the Sahel region (Kuol 2019). The instability and insecurity in countries such as Sudan, Mali, Niger, and Chad have led to a massive displacement of people, many of whom are forced to flee to Libya in search of safety and economic opportunities (Mundy 2019). The conflict in the Sahel region is driven by various factors, including Political instability and weak governance, Islamist extremism and terrorism, Ethnic and communal violence, Environmental degradation and resource scarcity among others (Bereketeab 2022). As a result, many people are forced to leave their homes and embark on perilous journeys to Libya, where they are often met with violence, exploitation, and slavery. The situation is further complicated by Libya's own political instability, civil war, and lack of effective governance, which creates an environment conducive to modern slavery and human trafficking.

3. ***Negative Influence of social media:*** Migrants move in attempts to pass through Libya to Europe using the Mediterranean Sea because some smugglers have told them lies on Facebook or any of the social media that life is beautiful over there, so they think something wonderful is waiting for them in Europe and when they arrive in Libya, they meet the unbelievable in which they are been sold in an open public auction at $ 400 into force labour (IOM 2017).

4. ***The Political and Economic Crisis Facing Most African Countries:*** Many West African countries are experiencing economic downturn and political instability. For instance, in Nigeria where the stark drop in oil prices has left many residents desperate for work as increased migration. In addition to migrants from Sudan, reports show that most of those fleeing to Europe through Libya are from the West African countries of Ghana, Nigeria, and Cameroun, Senegal, Gambia as a result of relatively political and economic crises (ACCORD 2019).

5. ***Get Rich Quick Syndrome:*** Most times some victims of human trafficking cut into the web of slavery in Libya are not satisfied with the little they have in their countries. Thus, in an attempt to make it big and quickly they are easily lured into believing that there are better opportunities in Europe. To buttress this fact, the financial implication of travelling through Libya to Europe at times for some of them is enough to start up a business back home (Osimen, Apeloko & Awogu-Maduagwu 2023; Boston 2022).

6. ***Lack or Ineffective Plan for Post-Gaddafi Era:*** Pecoraro (2012) contends that the rebel group that toppled Col Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 backed up by some Western powers did not see into the future to make concrete arrangements for governing the country after the exit of Gaddafi and the international organization efforts to ensure stable government in Libya is facing with challenges

of harmonizing different forces that emerged within the country after Gaddafi's demise. Thus, irreconcilable groups are fighting for the soul or control of Libya (Barbour, Fowler, Brown, Buru & Cordell 2024; BBC News 2016).

7. *The Level of Insecurity and Instability in Libya:* The major cause of the increase in the modern slave trade and refugees in Libya is as a result of the volatile state of the country after Gaddafi was toppled and killed. Libya is tending towards a failing state where there is no rule of law and also parallel government is in operation. The Islamic terrorist group also seized the opportunity of the Chaos to capture some areas and some areas are also controlled by a group loyal to Gaddafi. This development has generated lawlessness in Libya thereby fueling the modern slave trade because some of the groups are involved in the slave trade to generate funds (Farley 2018).

8. *Racism-rooted culture:* Libya, an Arab-dominated country, has historically been perceived as a melting pot of diverse cultures, with Black sub-Saharan Africans living alongside indigenous Black groups like the Black Arabs and Black Berbers. However, despite this perceived tolerance, reports of racist violence and discrimination have surfaced throughout Libya's history, as noted by The New York Times. North Africa has a deeply entrenched and complex history of racism, which has escalated to alarming levels in Libya since the 2011 uprising against Qaddafi. In the past years, many sub-Saharan Africans have migrated to Libya for work, primarily in unskilled labour roles. Unfortunately, this has been accompanied by a rise in racist incidents targeting Black migrants, indicating a deeply ingrained racism and anti-African sentiment within Libyan society, according to Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch (Kirkpatrick 2011). In recent years, individuals with dark skin, including Libyans and economic migrants, have faced heinous abuses, including torture, beatings, murder, sexual assault, theft, and arbitrary detention. Moreover, there have been multiple instances of gruesome public lynchings, highlighting the extreme nature of racial injustice in the region.

9. *Failure of transitional government to uphold the rule of law:* Cheatham (2023) contends Libya's transition to democracy has been marred by the failure of the transitional government to uphold the rule of law. Despite initial hopes for a peaceful and stable democracy, the government has struggled to maintain law and order, leading to a breakdown in security and the rise of armed groups. The lack of effective governance has also led to widespread corruption, human rights abuses, and a general sense of impunity. He added that Libya has faced numerous unsuccessful political transitions since 2012, causing significant hardship for its citizens. The country's internal conflicts and external influences have become increasingly intricate, risking a descent into further turmoil and violence. Despite efforts by local and national leaders to stabilize Libya, they have become disillusioned due to the failure of ruling elites and their international partners to provide basic security and effective governance (Cheatham 2023).

Discussions and Findings

Human security prioritizes the protection of individuals and communities, rather than state security (Gazizullin 2016). It is a people-centred approach that promotes protection from all forms of abuse and recognizes multiple dimensions of feeling safe, including freedom from fear, want, and indignity. Subjecting migrants, refugees, IDPs, and others to indignity is contrary to human security principles. As most African countries are signatories to laws protecting these groups, the implications of the modern slave trade and refugee issues on human security will be examined.

Farley (2018) posited that the modern slave trade in Libya refers to the illegal practice of enslaving, buying, and selling migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable individuals. This phenomenon has been documented since the 2011 Libyan Civil War and has escalated since 2017. Migrants and refugees, mainly from sub-Saharan Africa and the Sahel region, are attempting to reach Europe via Libya, but are often exploited and harmed by criminal smuggling networks (Barbour, Fowler, Brown, Buru & Cordell 2024; BBC News 2016). These networks, controlled by criminal organizations, frequently collaborate with militias and corrupt officials, perpetuating the illegal trade. As a result, migrants are held in detention centres where they face inhumane conditions, torture, abuse, and exploitation at the detriment of their human security (Cheatham 2023).

The migrants and refugees who are held in detention centres are subjected to various forms of exploitation, including forced labour, where they are forced to work in construction, agriculture, and domestic servitude which is antithetical to human security (Osimen, Apeloko & Awogu-Maduagwu 2023; Boston 2022). Additionally, women and minors are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, including sexual slavery and trafficking. Furthermore, there are reports of organ harvesting, where slaves are subjected to the removal of their organs for sale on the black market (ACCORD 2019). Migrants and refugees are being held against their will and treated as property, amounting to reports of enslavement. Additionally, slaves are subjected to physical and psychological torture, including beatings, burnings, and perpetuating a cycle of abuse. Moreover, victims have little to no access to legal recourse, leaving them vulnerable to ongoing exploitation and without a means to seek justice for the human rights violations they have suffered (IOM 2017).

(Bereketeab (2022) contends that the complicity of Libyan authorities on the issue of human security and militias has perpetuated the slave trade crisis, as government officials and armed groups are either actively involved in or willfully ignore the illegal activities. Slaves are forced to pay for their freedom, with families and friends often paying hefty ransoms, in addition to being subjected to extortion demands (IOM 2021). Moreover, detention centres in Libya are characterized by inhumane conditions, including overcrowding, poor sanitation, and limited access to food, water, and medical care, exacerbating the suffering of migrants and refugees which is the opposite of what human security represents (Mundy 2019). The deportation and repatriation of slaves to their countries of origin is a devastating reality, as they are forcibly returned to the same dangerous conditions they fled from, perpetuating the cycle of displacement and slavery (IOM 2021). This is all the more tragic given the limited access to asylum procedures and refugee status, which denies them the protection and safety they so desperately need. By deporting and repatriating slaves, we are essentially perpetuating a revolving door of exploitation and harm, condemning them to continued slavery and displacement, and denying them the chance to break free from the cycle of abuse (Kuol 2019).

The perpetuation of displacement is a critical aspect of the slave trade in Libya with connection to human security, and addressing this issue is crucial to preventing further exploitation and protecting human rights (IOM 2021). However, the complicity of Libyan authorities and militias in these human rights violations creates a significant obstacle to progress. Therefore, it is essential to address the crisis through legal and political means, to hold those responsible accountable and ensure the protection of human rights (Mundy 2019).

In summary, the factors that necessitated the modern slave trade and refugee crises in Libya were discovered to be a failure on the part of some African States, war, conflict, violence,

and persecution in neighbouring African countries, the political and economic crises facing most African countries, level of insecurity and instability in Libya, racism rooted culture among others. The study finds out some of the implications of the modern slave trade in Libya and the refugee crisis are far-reaching and devastating manifesting in the form of Forced labour, Human Rights Violations, Sexual exploitation, Organ harvesting, reports of enslavement, torture, and abuse, extortion and ransom demands, limited access to asylum procedures and refugee status, deportation and repatriation to countries of origin among others. Ultimately, the study captures few global reactions to the inhuman treatment of African migrants in Libya which was perceived as a symptom of deeper structural issues that require a comprehensive and coordinated response from African states, international organizations, and the global community. By addressing the root causes of migration and working towards a more just and equitable world, we can prevent the exploitation and suffering of countless individuals and promote a brighter future for all.

Conclusion

The migration of Africans to Libya is a complex issue driven by various factors, including the failure of some African states, war, conflict, violence, and persecution in neighbouring countries, political and economic crises, and insecurity and instability in Libya. The persistence of the modern slave trade in Libya and the refugee crisis are stark reminders of the dire consequences of these challenges. According to system theory, the whole world is interrelated and interconnected and the main goals of the international system are the promotion of order, peace, concord, freedom from strife, and war, adoption of common measures against disturbance, cooperation and friendship, promotion of human liberties and defence of human rights among others. Any part of the world like Libya undergoing instability and some miscreants are using the crisis to indulge in the modern slave trade is a concern for all other parts that make the aggregate whole. Therefore, in line with the human security framework, the global community is responsible for ensuring all human beings are protected irrespective of their status in any part of the world they migrated to.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. African states should prioritize education, skills development, and job creation to address the skills mismatch and unemployment driving migration.
2. Governments of African states should establish a multidisciplinary task force to address the push factors driving migration, including poverty, inequality, and political instability.
3. The African Union (AU) should strengthen its migration governance framework by developing and implementing effective policies and programs that address the complexities of migration, modern slavery, and refugee protection.
4. Governments, international organizations, and civil society organizations should collaborate to gather and analyze data on migration patterns, modern slavery, and refugee flows to inform evidence-based policy decisions and programming.

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