From Charity Homes to Baby Factories, the Evolvement of Baby Factories in Abia State, Nigeria

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Baby factory is becoming a common feature in south eastern Nigeria. This is more worrisome within the backdrop of the fight against sexual abuse and the law against child trafficking in Nigeria. The criminal act is not only flourishing, but also beating the dragnet of security operatives in the geopolitical space. It is against the backdrop that this paper explored the evolvement of baby factories in Abia state, Nigeria. This cross-sectional exploratory survey employed intra-method triangulation to collect data through key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and unobtrusive observation from 25 purposively selected respondents in Abia state. Findings revealed that most of the baby factories started as charity homes and evolved into baby factories which was caused by socioeconomic factors like 'get-rich-quick syndrome, ungodliness greed on the part of owners and operators of baby factory, infertility and barrenness, cultural value placed on having children in African homes, psychological trauma of not having children on the part of patronizers of baby factory, while poverty, stigmatization attached to getting pregnant outside wedlock, peer influence on the side of victims of baby factory. Dropping out of school, risks of contracting sexually transmitted diseases are the effects of baby factory. In view of curbing the menace, stiffer penalties should be meted out to offenders of baby factories while law enforcement agencies should cooperate and collaborate with the public for intelligence gathering.

Keywords: Baby factory, human trafficking, socioeconomic factors

Introduction
The term baby factory has also been used interchangeably with “baby farming” or “baby harvesting” they are described by journalists in Nigeria as criminal activities involving restrictions of a person’s movement against such person’s will, forced impregnations, sale of babies and illegal adoptions (Huntley, 2013: 10). The exploitation of these girls and women for such purpose is against their fundamental human rights, it is a criminal act that constitutes human trafficking that can conveniently lead to prosecution by National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and also violates the child adoption rules in Nigeria. It is a criminal act that contains the three constituent elements of human trafficking crime, “the act”, “the means” and “the purpose” (Huntley, 2013: 4). Baby factory is “where poverty stricken teenagers are paid a token to prospective mother, who would agree to bear a child that would eventually be sold out to childless couples and other available buyers” (Chioma, 2014). It is also defined as “locations where young ladies or girls, some teenagers or little above that, are harbedour and deliberately encouraged or forced to become pregnant and subsequently give up their babies for sale (Mba, 2014).

Since 2006, “baby harvesting” in Nigeria has taken dangerous and complex forms involving human trafficking alongside other illegal activities. For example, it has been reported in the literature that teenage girls and young women are brought by traffickers to so-called “baby factories” with false promises of jobs or safe abortions. Instead, they are confined and forced to give birth. Some of the victims are trafficked while being pregnant, while others are later impregnated by men specifically hired for such purposes. Allegedly, their babies are sold for international or domestic adoptions, rituals, or slave labour or sexual exploitation (Chioma, 2014; Mba, 2014).

In another study by Kalu (2011), which collaborates the assertions of Chioma (2014) and
Mba (2014) Kalu, opined that “the detected cases had similar fact patterns. pregnant teenagers or adult women with unwanted pregnancies approached doctors, clinics, nurses or orphanages that subsequently took care of the girls and women during their pregnancies. When the babies were born, they were sold to couples and available buyers. The natural mothers of the babies signed papers repudiating their claims on the babies and received monetary compensation (Kalu, 2011).

Baby factory which serve as avenue for human trafficking, abuse and sexual violence have been on the increase in Nigerian society today. The illegal business is not only flourishing in the south-east, but also beating the dragnets of security operatives in such areas. Baby factory has become an emergent human trafficking industry and a steady source of income to criminal cohorts involved in the act, particularly in the south-east region of Nigeria. Worst still, Madike (2013a) observed that many of the residents in communities in the identified states know the traders, where they operate, but watch helplessly as the babies are being sold into modern slavery or for ritual purposes (Huntley, 2013; Uduma, 2011).

A baby factory or baby farm is also a location where women who are encouraged or forced to become pregnant and give up their newborns for sale (Huntley, 2013). The phenomenon of ‘baby factory’ is an emerging trend in human trafficking in Nigeria (Dave-Odigie, 2008; Huntley, 2013). The baby factory phenomenon, the production and the selling of new born babies like every other commodity in Nigeria is not only embarrassing to the country, and the black race, it is a crime against humanity. The sad and very unfortunate dimension is that like most Trans boarder crimes such as drug trafficking, arms trafficking and prostitution, baby factories are becoming rampant in Nigeria, for instance according to Vanguard Newspaper dated 03 May 2018. Lagos state government sealed three baby factories and rescued 162 abandoned babies. In the same vein on 30th of April 2018, Abia state Police Command at Umuahia paraded a couple who sold their two-month-old baby girl for #300,000 claiming they did so because she was HIV positive.

In the case of the ‘baby factory’ phenomenon, both the baby and her mother may become objects of confinement and exploitation. In some rare instances, victims are held captive by their traffickers for extended periods in order to ‘harvest’ more babies for sale (Huntley, 2013). Victims of human trafficking are held bond against their will, restricted, oppressed, exploited and dehumanised. In dire instances, they are even maimed or killed. This brings the practice close to the pre-18th century slavery “which resulted in the sale of millions of black African able-bodied men as commodity of trade to be ferried across the sea and Sahara to work in tea and sugar plantations in Europe and America” (Agusiobo, 2007). Importantly, the abuse of children in different forms is as old as human history.

Commercial dealing on infants has been a fast burgeoning enterprise in some parts of Nigeria. This curious emerging enterprise has been quite prevalent in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria over the years. According to Asoluka (2013):

In more recent times, child trafficking has become a big and lucrative business in Nigeria. The ignoble trade, like most other crimes, has gained an unprecedented notoriety in the South East of the country. It is on record that the South East has unfortunately appropriated to itself the hub of the untoward conduct …. Growth in this pernicious trade has been directly linked to the increase in the demand for babies by the various categories of buyers, the knack for Nigerians to cut corners and the un-quenching desire of most to make profit even when it is not necessary.

The high prevalence of baby buying/selling in the South East of Nigeria has been vividly demonstrated by the proliferation of the so-called “baby factories” in the states of the region (The Nation, June 28, 2013). Currently, the business thrives as a “black market” with “black handed transactions” (Asoluka, 2013) that
depicts its illicit essence. The prevalence of the ‘trade in babies’ has been associated with a number of factors including: The premium placed on child-bearing as a means of ensuring genealogical inheritance and continuity; Demonization of infertility and childlessness; and Stigmatization of teenage pregnancy and single parenting (Street Journal, 2012; Onwuka, 2013 and Onyemelukwe-Onuobia, 2013).

Table 1: instances of baby factory discoveries in south eastern Nigeria, 2004 and 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>STATE</th>
<th>INCIDENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Enugu</td>
<td>A baby factory operating in the guise of a maternity home was discovered at Zik Avenue, Enugu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Enugu</td>
<td>A network of baby factories claiming to be orphanages was revealed in Enugu Metropolis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>Forty-two (42) pregnant girls were discovered at a baby factory in Umunkpeyi Nvosi in Isiala Ngwa Local Government of Abia State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>Police raided a baby factory and rescued about thirty-two (32) pregnant girls in Aba town; the baby factory was known as ‘The Cross Foundation’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Anambra</td>
<td>Thirty (30) pregnant girls were rescued from a baby factory (Iheanyi Ezuma Foundation) in Ihiala Local Government of Anambra State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>Nineteen (19) pregnant girls were discovered in a baby factory in the town of Umuahia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>Twenty-six (26) pregnant girls were rescued from a baby factory in Aba north Local Government of Abia State by the police. Two (2) male adults were also arrested there in connection with impregnating some of the girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Abia</td>
<td>About thirty-two (32) pregnant girls were rescued from a baby factory in Umuozuo, Osisioma Ngwa Local Government Area of Abia State.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Imo</td>
<td>Seventeen (17) pregnant girls were discovered in a baby factory operating in Owerri town.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Enugu</td>
<td>Six (6) girls were rescued from a baby factory operating as a conventional health clinic in Enugu town.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Okoli, 2014

The records reflected on Table 1 point to the rising incidence of baby buying/selling in the South East of Nigeria. The incidents recorded on the table are only a few isolated instances of reported baby factory discoveries over the recent years. There are many of such cases that were never reported or publicized by the media. Yet, a lot more have been undergoing security investigations to establish criminal culpability. The spate of baby factories in South-Eastern Nigeria, among other things, suggests that the region is grappling with an infant trafficking pandemic, with an avalanche of black-market charity and maternity homes in operation.

In a recent study, Okoli (2013) opined that “Baby factories” are usually disguised as maternity homes, orphanages, social welfare homes, clinics, and even water bottling factories. The traffickers are the owners of these facilities, with some of them being medical doctors. They run their “business” with the help of employees, among whom may be men specifically hired to impregnate women and girls. According to Okoli, “baby factories” are operated by well-organised criminal syndicates. Some of the traffickers are recidivists and have been arrested several times by police for operating such “baby factories” (Okoli, 2013).

The first and the principal actor is the proprietor of ‘a baby factory’ whose role is to ‘garnier’, harbour and nurture unmarried pregnant girls with a view to obtaining babies for sale. The proprietor usually poses as an altruistic health or social worker; and in some cases a charity or faith disciple homes. Under the pretext of a dubious Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) or a Faith-Based Organization (FBO), the proprietor creates an affected platform tactically designed to advance his illicit business. The use of NGOs and FBOs as a subterfuge for perpetrating illicit business in Nigeria explains the apparent proliferation of such organizations in the South-Eastern Nigeria, nay elsewhere in the country. In
2012, a former Commissioner for Women Affairs and Social Development in Anambra State, Dr. Ego Uzoezie, disclosed that "more than fifty (50) illegal orphanages and motherless babies' homes are operating within the State" (Street Journal, 2012; Onwuka, 2013).

The second actor in the baby market enterprise is the middleman. This is an agent (broker) commissioned by the proprietor of a 'baby factory' to prospect, scout and solicit for public patronage to his illicit business. The middleman actively recruits single pregnant girls for his employee, the proprietor. He is also responsible for looking for possible baby buyers to patronize their venture. For his role, the middleman gets a pecuniary reward in the form of a commission per good 'business' turn. With reference to a similar incident that took place in a private hospital at Zik Avenue, Enugu in 2004, a media report documents:

... the clinic had agents who went in search of pregnant single girl; the job of the agents on the hospital management’s payroll was to convince the girls to come to the clinic and register instead of aborting their pregnancies .... Unfortunately, their babies are sold when they put to bed and the mother paid off' (Street Journal, 2012).

The third actor is the vulnerable young pregnant girl. She is unmarried and often facing rejection and stigmatization from family and society (Asoluka, 2013). She is stranded and desperate to overcome her plight. She then finds solace in one of the 'charity' or 'maternity' homes where she is assured of good ante-natal care and post-natal 'pay-off'; the 'pay off' being a token of cash payment by which she gives up her presumably unwanted baby to the host organization for onward sale to a possible adoptive parents or couple.

The baby buyer is the last participant in the 'value-chain' of the illicit trade. Being desperate to adopt a child for emotional or socio-cultural reasons, he is ready and eager to pay quite handomely in exchange for a baby. And when he does, the 'baby sale' transaction is thus consummated. This transaction typically bears out core elements of market exchange. Way back in 2004, a media report observed:

The mothers got between N40,000 and N60,000 for female children while those who were delivered of baby boys were paid between N80,000 and N100,000 .... Most of those (clients) on the list were said to have paid about N100,000 just to register with the clinic. The financial capability also determined how much was paid, though baby girls then went between N250,000 and N400,000 while boys were sold for between N500,000 and N1million depending on the financial strength and bargaining power of the buyer (Street Journal, 2012).

Furthermore, baby factories' in the South East of Nigeria indicate that 'baby business' is on the booming scale. Apart from enriching the operators of the so-called baby factories, the emerging industry has created for its efficiency a crop of jobbers and agents who rely on the illicit business to make a living. As observed by Asoluka (2013) "There are those who serve as facilitators. These are people who engage in 'runs' to make a living, and are the go-betweens for the potential buyer and the baby factory owner...." The tendency to indulge in baby selling in Nigeria becomes rather compelling in the face of dire socio-economic and livelihood malaise in the country. In this context, it could be seen as one of the desperate survival tactics that people may resort to in a bid to cope with harsh conditions of living. Hence, some teenage girls voluntarily go into baby trade as a means of etching (sic) out a living, as recently reported of a couple who claimed they sold their baby in order to raise money to pay their rent! (Asoluka, 2013).

The situation has been complicated in the South East of Nigeria by the prevailing culture of commercialism and materialism, whereby marketization and monetization of social life have come a long way in defining the economic and normative complexion of society. Recent developments in the 'baby sale' saga have revealed vital trappings of human trafficking of the buccaneer order. Pregnant girls are often held against their will under prison-like conditions,
after they have been recruited through moral or diabolical suasion, but also material inducement. Some of them are forcibly retained after the first delivery in order to continue to reproduce for the host organization. To this end, mature males are hired by the host organization to impregnate the girls for onward procreation.

Other root causes of the phenomenon of Nigerian “baby factories” may be those that facilitate any other forms of human trafficking, such as poverty and high unemployment rates particularly in rural areas, low levels of education and literacy, corruption, and lack of information on human trafficking (Meleena, 2012). For example, the majority of the Nigerian population live below the income poverty line on less than 1 dollar per day. Poverty levels are higher in rural areas, making women and children from these areas more vulnerable to human trafficking (Meleena, 2012). In case of “baby factories” traffickers maybe more successful in “recruiting” such victims, inciting them with false promises of jobs or money in exchange for their babies. The lack of education and low levels of literacy also contribute to the poverty problem, since they limit women’s and children’s opportunities to get better rewarded jobs in the future. This may also allow traffickers to entice their victims with promises of receiving education and acquiring skills (Meleena, 2012). Corruption is another major problem in Nigeria, particularly amongst police and judges. Both can be easily bribed to reach favourable outcomes for alleged traffickers. Corruption of law enforcement and judges makes the arrest and prosecution of traffickers inefficient and contributes to high profit and low risk of the human trafficking “business,” including “baby factories” in Nigeria (Meleena, 2012).

Theoretical Framework
This article is anchored on the Social Action theory of Max Weber. Weber argues that all human action is directed by meanings. He identified various types of action that are distinguished by the meanings on which they are based. In doing so, he clearly demonstrates his multidimensional approach to the problem of action. First is instrumental-rational action. Such action is geared toward the efficient pursuit of goals through calculating the advantages and disadvantages associated with the possible means for realizing them. Under this category would fall the benefactor of the baby factory who goes to buy a baby due to high value placed on children in Nigeria. Like instrumental-rational action, value-rational action involves the strategic selection of means capable of effectively achieving one’s goals. However, value-rational action is pursued as an end in itself, not because it serves as a means for achieving an ulterior goal. Perpetrators of baby factory believe they could achieve their economic goal through baby factory and that is why they engage in such act despite sanction and punishments being meted out to culprits.

The third type of social action outlined by (Weber, 1947) is traditional action, where behaviours are determined by habit or long standing custom. Here, an individual’s conduct is shaped not by a concern with maximizing efficiency or commitment to an ethical principle, but rather by an unreflective adherence to established routines. This category includes societal stigmatization of unwanted pregnancies and this action scare the girl away and makes her find succour in the hands of unscrupulous baby factory merchants. The fourth type is affective action, which is marked by impulsiveness or a display of unchecked emotions. Absent from this behaviour is the calculated weighing of means for a given end.

It is important to point out that in everyday life a given behaviour or course of conduct is likely to exhibit characteristics of more than one type of social action. Thus, a person may pursue a career in social work not only because it is a means for
earning a salary, but also because he is committed
to the goal of helping others as a value in its own
right. Weber's categories of social action, then,
serve as ideal types or analytical constructs against
which real-life cases can be compared. Such
“pure” categories are not realized in concrete
cases, but instead are a conceptual yardstick for
examining differences and similarities, as well as
causal connections, between the social processes
under investigation. Thus, “ideal” refers to an
emphasis on particular aspects of social life
specified by the researcher, not to a value
judgment as to whether something is “good” or
“bad.” Having examined the thesis of the social
action theory, it is therefore pertinent to situate the
theory within the context of the baby factory
phenomenon in Nigeria. It is no doubt that the
illicit but lucrative business has assumed a new
dimension both in content and context. Essentially,
the business has become well-organized to the
extent that it gains recognition and approval from
the public in the name of fostering homes.

Individual actions in the act of infant
trafficking are goal-oriented and directed. All the
parties to the illegal business have subjective
meanings attached to their actions. For instance,
the principal actor, also known as the proprietor of
‘a baby factory’, engages in the illicit business due
to surrounding social conditions in the society.
The increasing rate of infertility in the country is a
good example. It creates opportunity for the owner
of a baby factory to generate income and earn a
living amidst the economic hardship endemic in
the country. Proprietors' actions are therefore
g geared towards maximizing gains and minimizing
incurred cost. Weber called this type of action
instrumental-rational action. In fact, all parties
involved in the business are calculative, weighing
the cost and benefit of a course of action.
However, the moral or ethical principles guiding
the actions of the baby factory workers are
debatable.

**Methods**
The sample size used in the study consisted of
twenty five (25) respondents. In the study areas
the researcher conducted a total of fifteen (15) in-
depth interviews. Six of whom were victims of the
baby factory activity, two (2) were formal owners
of baby factory, three (3) were community leaders,
two (2) were pastors and two (2) were
gynaecologists. The researcher also purposefully
selected and conducted ten (10) key informant
interviews with officials from the following; the
Nigerian Police, located in three police stations at
Aba, from where key informant interviews were
conducted with five officers; three male DPOs,
one male DCO and one female ASP, two officers
(male and female) of Nigerian Security and Civil
Defence Corps and two (male and female) staff
from the Ministry of Women Affairs, Umuahia.

The sampling techniques employed in
selecting respondents for the study were the
purpose and snowball sampling techniques
which are non-probability sampling techniques
and are suitable for studies which are qualitative in
nature. The purposeful sampling techniques was
used because the respondents to be selected in this
study were of a distinct nature due to the type of
activity they are into which is hidden and illegal.
Their specific knowledge of the subject matter
under investigation predisposed the researcher to
adopt these sampling techniques. The researcher
adopted the snowball sampling technique which
was used in making initial contact with one of the
respondents who later assisted the researcher in
gaining access to the other respondents.

Ethical considerations were emphasized
throughout the period of data collection; the
anonymity of study participants was guaranteed,
and their recruitment was on the basis of voluntary
and informed consent. In addition, the principle of
no harm to subjects was applied. Prior to the
commencement of interviews, the participants
were informed of the ultimate benefits the study
would bring to them. They were also informed
about their right to withdraw from the study at any
time. Data were subjected to ethnographic and
manual content analysis. The analysis started with
translation of digital audio-recorded responses
from pigeon English to English. To ensure that
meanings were not lost in the process of
translation, the English version was back-
translated to vernacular for the purpose of
consistency. Thereafter, relevant materials were
transcribed verbatim. The next stage involved
careful isolation of different responses in line with
study objectives. Thus insights were paraphrased
or quoted verbatim in the course of data
presentation.

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Findings and Discussions
The findings are presented alongside with discussion based on the three specific objectives of the research; namely factors responsible for rise in baby factory, evolvement of baby factories and effects of baby factories on the victims of the practice. The views of respondents and participants in the research are presented. In order to avoid unnecessary repetition, the views that largely reflected the position of most of the respondents and participants on a particular objective were presented.

Factors responsible for rise in baby factory
From the viewpoint of the participants and respondents, there is enough evidence to support the belief that the need for material gain is one of the major factors or rather the main reason leading to the rise of baby factories as far as the proprietorship of the baby factor is concerned. The proprietors of the baby factory agreed to this fact by stating that the lucrative aspect of the business is enough motivation for one to delve into the business not minding the associated risks. In this regard, an owner of one of the demolished baby factory within Aba Metropolis has this to say on how he got involved in baby factory business:

"I got involved with the baby factory through my friends. I noticed that my friends were living above our salaries, they changed cars like it wasn’t money they bought them with. I normally asked them that whatever business they were into they should show me the way so I could be like them but they always declined telling me what kind of business they were into. But I kept on pestering them. They eventually asked me if I was willing to join them. It was them that I asked them that I hope it wasn’t money rituals because I wouldn’t be party to that. They were then doubtful if they should get me involved. They finally told me they ran an adoption home though it is illegal. I told them I was willing to join them."

Owner of demolished baby factory/female/married/Civil Servant/Abia/Christian/Igbo
From the above, it is obvious that what first stimulated interest of the proprietor in this regard was the financial success the friends sudden brandished. This show how in a flash the fortunes of the friends changed to the extent that the proprietor could no longer rub shoulder with them. The other factors responsible for the emergence of the baby factory emanates from the victims. That is the pregnant girls. This is because without the occurrence of unwanted pregnancies or the willingness of the girls to participate in the production of babies for sale, the factories will not be profitable if they would have existed at all. The first involves those that want to run away from the shame, keeping a pregnancy that resulted out of wedlock, and those that were thrown out of their homes by their parents as soon as they are pregnant. The second category involves those who on their own decided to go to the home to get pregnant and sell off the babies. The number of these categories of victims vary from one home to the other. In other words, while one home had more of the girls in the first category, some have the second. In any case, the application of the second category seems more promising, as one capable of guessing the likely profit from such venture even though the likelihood of more profit exists in the first category. This is because of the likelihood of some of the girls to abandon even the money and the baby after delivery coupled with the possibility of the management exploiting the vulnerability of the victims as most of them are so determined on making sure that the secret of the pregnancy was not revealed. Therefore they are not positioned to enter into any form of bargain or disagreement with the owner or the management of the homes. However the problem associated with the application of this category is that one is not certain on when such opportunity will present or the number of them that can occur at any given time. This is very much unlike what obtains in the second category where the number of the girls and the number of the successful pregnancy and by extension the number of safe deliveries are easy to calculate the amount of money likely to enter through the transactions.

Some of the victims in the second category claimed that they were forced to engage in the act
of selling their babies due to the denial of the pregnancy by their boyfriends or rather those that made them pregnant. When this happens, the victims are left with no option other than to resort to the baby factories where they can hide from the knowledge of the public and have their babies delivered. This is also because most of them do not want to engage in any form of abortion either because they are scared of the immediate or subsequent consequence or because such act are considered sinful in moral and religious sense. In respect to this, one of the victims has this to say:  

"my boyfriend who impregnated me did not want the baby. My parents did not want the baby too. I did not want to be stigmatized by my friends and other people living around me of having a child out of wedlock. I was afraid of what people will say".

Pregnant girl/female/single/Secondary school dropout/Aba/Christian/Igbo  
It was based on this that she had no other option than to go to the baby factory to have the baby delivered. In the words of another:  

"I was trying to run away from shame especially from my parents, my church and where I live. I did not want to disappoint my parents. I could have still managed to stay back home if the boy that impregnated me accepted the pregnancy, but since he did not, I had to look for an alternative".

Pregnant girl/female/single/Secondary school dropout/Aba/Christian/Igbo  
The alternative in this regard was to patronize the owners of the baby factory. In this kind of patronage, the owners of the baby factory are in the believe that they are the ones doing favour to the pregnant women as they would have had no other option other than to face all the consequences that they are running away from. It is also in the light of this kind of imbalance in relationship that the victims equally regard themselves as those being helped and the owners of the baby factories are those that are trying to help them out. Another respondent explained it thus:

"I am sure that there are so many people there who have similar cases like mine. I can’t blame them for going there to look for help, and it is a shame to get pregnant without the man wanting to claim responsibility".

Pregnant girl/female/single/Secondary school dropout/Aba/Christian/Igbo  
Therefore, with a mindset such as this, the victims have no other option than to agree to the various conditions of life they meet at the homes. In addition to this, is lack of family support both on the side of their pregnant girls that come to the home on their own and those that are forced into the home due to the hope of bearing 'unwanted' pregnancy. On the side of those in the former, some of them claimed that they came to the home to become pregnant because they needed to raise money from the pregnancy to support their families. On the other hand, those in the later were forced to come to the home since they were sent out of their homes by their parents for bringing shame upon themselves and upon the family. As a result they have no other place to go other than the baby factory. In any case, it is important to mention here that irrespective of the circumstance that brought the victims to the homes, the victims are usually at the receiving end to the greatly benefit of the baby factory owners.

Literature has shown the deplorable state of the Nigerian economy as the major factor precipitating baby factory phenomenon. UNESCO in 2006 early identified poverty, pervasion of cultural traditions, and manipulation of religious rituals, harmful cultural and social realities as some root causes of the baby factory phenomenon in Nigeria. Likewise, Charles et al. (2014) found that abject poverty is the primary motivation that propels mothers and young girls in the baby factories, most of them are illiterates. Also they found out that the lack of ethical behaviours on the part of the medical professionals also contributes to the boom of the business. Greed and ungodliness which are traits of this unwholesome practice also fuels the crime. Few of the buyers of the babies purchase them for ritual purposes while other buyers resell them for profit mostly people living in the diaspora, some of the buyers are women who are barren and have issues in their
marriages. Consumers of the numerous products of baby factories situated mainly in the south-east Nigeria are believed to be women living in the cities of Abuja, Lagos and south-south region (Charles et al., 2014). Human trafficking, including the selling of children, is the third most common crime after fraud and drug trafficking, according to the United Nations. The nuisance of baby factory cannot just be tied to a particular factor, rather it is linked to several chains of societal problems of which ‘poverty and ignorance’ are basic factors. From 2006 till date, the proliferation of baby factories has become an emergent human trafficking industry with steady source of income to criminal cohorts involved in the act, particularly in the south-east region of Nigeria (Mdike, 2013a).

Effects of baby factory phenomenon on the victims of the practice
There are risks involved in engagement with a baby factory or better put the reliance on a baby factory as a way to make ends meet or evade the impending societal shame weigh so much on the victims that patronize the baby factory more than it does to the owner of the baby factory. This is because apart from the risk of losing their property or going to jail in the case of those convicted, the owners are usually full of hope of making greater gain out of the venture, but this is not so with the victims. On the side of the victims, the risks involved include gynecological damage, death, the disintegration of the family, moral burden, and the possibility of dropping out of school.

As it regards the risk of gynecological damage, the victims are not usually taken care of as the emphasis is more on the fetus than on the victims. Sometimes, when the doctors come to check on the victims and this is usually before they give birth to their babies, this check is mainly to ascertain the welfare of the baby in order to ensure that the fetus is in good health as any defect or still birth results to huge loss to the owners. This clearly shows as soon as the baby is delivered. In the words of one of the informants: No doctor comes for any post-natal treatment. When our babies are delivered, we don’t even see them not to talk more of knowing if they are taken care of. All the two babies I gave birth to, I never saw them, all I know is labour comes and I deliver. You are left alone to manage with breast pain, breast full with milk but no baby to suck it.

Baby factory victim/Female/Igbo/Christian/SS2/Single/Aba
The implication of this is that whether the woman survives or dies after the pregnancy is not of any concern to the owners of the homes. It is for the sake of making another baby that she may be taken care of. In extreme cases they are at risk of death. The next assertion by one of the police respondent further buttresses the above claim when he stated that sometimes the girls are physically murdered and either buried or discarded at unknown places. In his words:

“disagreements arises as to how the money should be shared, there is always likelihood of strangulating the victims and disposing their bodies in an unknown, as we have handled incessant cases of missing pregnant girls.”

DPO/Male/Aba/Married/Igbo/Christian/Civil Servant/Central Police Station Aba
The above findings and assertions is in line with the findings of UNICEF (2002), International Labour organization (2005), Pearsons (2005), UNODOC (2002) and Odigie (2002). Most of the victims are aware of the possibility of this and as such do not usually engage in fierce disagreement with the management. Most especially as most victims in the homes are there without the knowledge or the parents or any of their relative thereby living their fate in the hands of the management. The sense of loss on the victims after delivery is so heavy that most of the victims feel that it may take a lifelong for them to forget such experiences despite their monetary gains. This bothers so much on the fact that they are not meant to see their babies nor know the persons that bought them, and as such they are fully in the knowledge that they will never get to know or see their babies. This experience weighs so much that most of them feel that they have completely lost everything even when they have avoided the seeming consequential shame of made some profit in the case of those who came to the home to make money. The Head, Child and Human Trafficking Department of Nigerian Securities and Civil Defense Corp, Abia State, who was one of the respondents had this to say on this:
Sometimes, after the mothers have delivered off their babies, they are usually injected and their babies taken away from them, when they wake and ask after their babies, they are usually told that the babies are dead. If they behave too inquisitively, they are sometimes murdered so that they won’t go out and report to securities.

Head of Human Trafficking Department
NSCDC/Male/Christian/Igbo/Married/Aba

In another development, the victims at the homes are made to undergo forceful and perhaps, unnecessary caesarean section or inducement of labour even when naturally the labour is not due. When this happens, that is, when the caesarean section is conducted the stitching is carelessly done in a hurry thus leaving the mothers/girls at the risk of their lives. It is obvious from the experiences and stories of the victims that they have missed so much in terms of their education. As soon as the girls get pregnant, the first obvious impact was to drop out of school. Therefore, what occupies the minds of those affected by this is to deliver their babies and get back to school. As one of them lamented:

“I suppose to be in school by now if not because of this pregnancy. As soon as I deliver this baby, I will go back to school, I will never get pregnant again.

This has really thought me a very big lesson”.

Victim of baby of factory/Female/18years/Christian/Osisioma/Igbo/Single

In any case, more worrisome situation in this regard is that some of the girls face the risk of not continuing with their education. When this is obtained, they may have no other option than to roam the streets and then face the risk of getting pregnant again.

Evolution of Baby Factory in Abia state

The phenomenon and incidences of baby factory business in the Eastern part of Nigeria has assumed features that are prominently contradictory to the cardinal conception of child bearing especially among the Igbos. This is because the child is considered as a gift from God and hence ought to accord utmost respect if not reverence. However, this ideal have in the recent times trampled upon as a result of the emergence of various categories of baby factory within the region. As has earlier been pointed out, the idea of a baby factory, depicts a scenario where children are traded through various kinds of inducement ranging from monetary to gift items. It was in line with this that Mba (2014) and Chioma (2014) maintained that the victims so induced are usually forced or based into pregnancy and are subsequently made to part with their children or child as it were. The emergence of baby factory relied intensively on the institution of charity homes. Why this is so is because most of the baby factories in the Eastern part of Nigeria were either disguised as Charity homes or registered charity homes, one that eventually transformed into a baby factor mostly due to the heavy financial benefit crumble from such venture. Take for instance the case of the baby factory where this research was conducted, though now extinct due to the demolition of the home by the government. The home started as a charity home where motherless and abandoned babies were taken care of and were loyally adopted by families that are in need of a child or children at the completion of the required process(es). However, due to high demand of children by prospective ‘adopters’ and the concomitant finances, the owner of the charity home decided to enhance the level of production.”
that is, increase the number of children for adoption, the actualization of this required involvement of other agents such as girls that are willing to assist the production of babies to be adopted. This increase in the sales and the higher monetary ventures forced the owner to change that method of practice and hence, the charity home was transformed into a baby factory where babies were churned out in tens at intervals and sold to prospective buyers for several needs. Though the charity home changed its method of operation as mentioned above, it nevertheless obtained the name of the charity home in order to deceive the general public. In respect of this, one of the respondents who was a community leader in one of the communities where the baby factory was located pointed out succinctly that greed was among the factories that pushed the owner of the charity home into transforming the home into a baby factory. This was his direct words:

The people of our community have always identified with the charity home since they believed that the owner was using the channel to assist and enable those who are helpless and could not in any way help themselves. It was very surprising to the community when the news began filtering in that the owner of the home was engaging in other business other than raising helpless children that are motherless and suddenly when security agents raided the place and saw many pregnant girls.

**Community leader/Male/married/ Business-man/Osisioma/Christian/Igbo**

The extension of this view shows that when suspicion of the villagers was roused due to the number of person that continuously popped up at the home which was very unusual compared to inactive of its home ab initio. As a result, the villagers were dismayed at the instance of busting of the home by the security agents. In any case, the greater surprise was the number of the girls that were at the centre who were pregnant at the time of the burst. Another factor that roused suspicion was when the management of the home came up with restriction on entry into the home which was not so initially. What obtained before was that the residents in the area had free movement into the home especially when they have one item or the other which they want to donate for the maintenance of the home and sustenance of the children inhabited in the home. When they could not gain access into the home as was case before, they kept wandering what the matter could be.

In other situations the baby factories are disguised as NGOs or FBOs that are responsible for helpless and motherless children. The discovery of these illegal or illicit homes showed that none of them that claimed to be a non-governmental organization was duly registered. A further revelation showed that these illegal homes did not only engage in the sales of babies but equally solicited for alms from the general public for the running of the homes. Sometimes, such search for help was not that the home needed the money but are meant to divert the attention of the public in order for them not to suspect the influx of income into the homes. A female respondent stated that she has been involved in seeking for alms from the general public for the running of one of the homes in her area. According to her, this involved distribution of leaflets that contained information about the difficulties faced by the inhabitants of the home which included the need for clothing, feeding, bedding, water, and provisioning of education for the inhabitants of the home. The research showed that when those that assisted in soliciting for help or other visitors manage to enter the home, they are meant to stay in one of the open places just immediately at the entrance to the home. This was to prevent them from seeing the girls that are used in the production of the babies as this will arouse suspicions. When this group of persons involved in begging come back from this mission, they are usually equipped with not only money but other items such as clothing, food, beverages, foot wears, and writing materials. Some of the members of this group see this as a charity work which they attach some kind of spiritual value to, and as such do not wish to be paid for doing such.

**Conclusion**

The emergence of baby factory in the Eastern part of Nigeria evolved from charity homes. This is because most of the baby factories in the Eastern part of Nigeria were either disguised as Charity homes or registered homes that eventually transformed into a baby factory mostly due to the heavy financial benefit crumble from such
venture. The baby factory victims are recruited when some of the girls who get pregnant come to the home to deliver their babies and go home. The management of the baby factory exploits situations such as when girls get pregnant and don’t want their parents and guardian to be aware of it. The need for material gain is one of the reasons or rather the main reason leading to the establishment of baby factories, as far as the proprietorship of the baby factor is concerned. While lack of family support both on side of their pregnant girls that come to the home on their own and those that are forced into the home due to the bearing of unwanted pregnancy, to cover the shame they will bring upon themselves and family, and to raise money to start business are other factors that gave rise to baby factory phenomenon. Forceful and unnecessary caesarean section or inducement or labour even when naturally the labour is not due, careless stitching, dropping out of school and missing so much in terms of their education, risk of contacting sexually transmitted diseases from the men who are paid to impregnate them, guilty laden, psychological trauma and the risk of complication and death during obstructive birth. While on the side of the owners of the baby factory, their risk includes losing their property or going to jail are the effects of baby factory phenomenon.

Recommendation

The findings of this study necessitated the following recommendations:

Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations should work in synergy to provide free education most especially for the girl child up to first degree in Nigeria. Education will go a long way to enlighten the girls on the risks involved in making and selling babies.

Stakeholders and policy makers should endeavour to create employment in Nigeria. Once the youths and teenagers who are out of school are empowered, poverty will reduce and baby factory will no longer thrive.

State government and its agencies should collaborate with international agencies to create a child friendly environment to surmount the baby factory scourge and take pre-emptive actions against the culprits. Child life protection Act should be made to prohibit and punish persons caught in the sale of babies in Nigeria with stiffer penalties.

Government should motivate NAPTIP and other security agencies by paying their salaries as at when due that will make them to perform effective in detecting baby factories homes, not only in Eastern part of Nigeria but in other parts of the country. National orientation agency should launch a campaign against baby factory and create more awareness about “baby factories” phenomenon and its dangers among the populace.

Law enforcement agencies charged with the role of curbing baby factory and human trafficking should be trained on how best to identify and investigate baby factory cases. Such agencies should also be enlightened on the importance of public cooperation in terms of information sharing and intelligence gathering. And members of communities were such baby factories exist should endeavour to tip the security agencies with such information as the security agencies could not fight the menace of baby factory alone.

References


