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Impact of Modern Slavery on The Psychosocial Wellbeing of Children in Bódija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

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Abstract

*In Nigeria, modern slavery manifests in various ways, such as child labor, human trafficking, forced begging, and domestic servitude. These problems are driven by a range of socio-economic issues. Children who are caught in these practices suffer physical and emotional harm, affecting their mental health. This study looked into the effect of modern slavery on the mental and social health of children in the Bódija market in Ibadan, Oyo State. A descriptive survey method was used. The study's sample consisted of children engaged in child labor at the Bódija market. Respondents were chosen using a purposive sampling method, focusing on the market area. Data was collected using a custom questionnaire. The study tested four hypotheses using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with a significance level set at 0.05. The results showed a significant link between modern slavery and the psychological health of children in Bódija market, Ibadan, Oyo State ($r(152) = .504^{**}$, $p < .05$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The second finding indicated a significant correlation between modern slavery and the cognitive health of these children ($r(152) = .755^{**}$, $p < .05$). The third hypothesis found a significant relationship between modern slavery and children's behavioral health in Bódija market ($r(152) = .670^{**}$, $p < .05$). The final result revealed a significant link between modern slavery and the social health of children in Bódija market ($r(152) = .163^*$, $p < .05$). These findings suggest that modern slavery has a substantial impact on the psychological, cognitive, behavioral, and social health of children in the market. The study*

concluded that efforts to reduce children's vulnerability require increased access to education and better enforcement of child protection laws. Without proper education, children are at greater risk of hazardous work or being exploited by traffickers offering false promises. The study recommended that social workers develop educational programs to raise awareness among parents and policymakers about the negative effects of child exploitation, particularly on children's mental and social well-being.

Key Words: Modern Slavery, Psychosocial Wellbeing, Children

Introduction

The psychosocial well-being of children in Nigeria is key to their overall development, touching on emotional, psychological, and social factors. A variety of influences play a role in shaping this aspect of children's growth, and gaining insight into these elements is crucial for promoting their positive development. The quality of education, the number of available schools, and children's access to learning resources significantly affect their psychosocial growth. Barriers to education can lead to feelings of exclusion and impede intellectual development. Economic inequality in Nigeria also has a major impact on children's psychosocial well-being. Limited access to basic resources, education, and healthcare can create stressors that harm their mental and emotional state. The family is central to children's psychosocial health. Stable family structures, emotional support, and positive parenting practices build resilience and contribute to the mental health of Nigerian children (Ogunfowokan et al., 2014). Likewise, community factors, such as cultural norms and support systems, shape children's social experiences. When children are engaged in positive community activities, it boosts their social skills and provides a sense of belonging (Ebigbo, 2017). Access to healthcare services affects both physical and mental health. Challenges like infectious diseases and malnutrition can have long-term effects on children's psychological well-being (Omigbodun, 2012).

Nigeria's rich cultural diversity leads to a range of psychosocial experiences. Recognizing these cultural distinctions is important for effectively addressing children's

mental health issues within Nigeria's cultural context (Atilola, 2014). Gender roles and expectations can affect psychosocial well-being differently for boys and girls, making it essential to address gender disparities to ensure fair outcomes (Ebigbo, 2017). A nurturing environment is also crucial for children's healthy development (UNICEF, 2021). However, modern slavery poses a significant threat to children's well-being in Nigeria. Children are trafficked, exploited, and often forced into hard labor. Modern slavery, as defined by the U.K.'s Modern Slavery Act (2015), includes severe forms of human exploitation. For minors under the age of 18, modern slavery is seen as violence against children, child abuse, and a gross violation of child rights, demanding urgent safeguarding and healthcare responses (WHO, 2019). Modern slavery encompasses a range of practices, including forced labor, human trafficking, and child exploitation. The International Labour Organization estimates that more than 150 million children globally are involved in child labor (ILO, 2021).

According to the 2018 Global Slavery Index, 40.3 million people worldwide are victims of modern slavery, with women and girls comprising 71 percent of the total. Modern slavery is most prevalent in Africa, with an estimated 9.2 million people living in servitude, followed by Asia and the Pacific region (Global Slavery Index, 2018). State-imposed forced labor and forced marriages are primary drivers of modern slavery, often exacerbated by armed conflict and underdeveloped states (ILO, 2012). The transatlantic slave trade, which persisted in Europe and the Americas for centuries, was officially outlawed by most nations by 1850, with Brazil being one of the last to abolish it in 1888. A child, according to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1979), is any person under 18 years old. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and Nigeria's Child Rights Act (2003) share this definition. Although childhood is defined by cultural norms that have shifted over time, child slavery remains unacceptable and illegal in most places. Children are especially vulnerable to exploitation, with 218 million children worldwide aged 4-17 engaged in employment, and 152 million involved in child labor, with 73 million in hazardous work (UN, 2000).

Child trafficking, perhaps the most recognized form of modern slavery, involves recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving children for exploitation (UN General Assembly, 2000). Trafficking often involves relocating the victim, leading to isolation and dependency. Children are trafficked for various reasons that often overlap, such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, and more (Brayley & Cockbain, 2014). In different regions, trafficking may take unique forms to meet local demand, such as using child soldiers, child camel jockeys, or forced surrogacy, all with serious health impacts (Shaheen et al., 2013; Adéyemí et al., 2019). In Nigeria, modern slavery manifests in forms like child labor, human trafficking, forced begging, and domestic servitude. These practices persist due to a mix of socio-economic factors, weak enforcement, and gaps in legislation (ILO, 2021). Economic hardship in Nigeria contributes to the prevalence of modern slavery among children. Poverty drives families to desperate measures, leading to children's exploitation as a survival strategy (UNICEF, 2019). The lack of quality education heightens the risk of children being exploited or trafficked (ILO, 2019).

Children subjected to modern slavery often suffer physical and psychological trauma. Exposure to violence and exploitation can have lasting impacts on their mental health, affecting self-esteem, trust, and resilience (Kaltner et al., 2019). Forced labor and human trafficking also break the social bonds that are crucial for children's development, leading to feelings of isolation and hampering social skills development (Stoiber & Kruger, 2018). Despite Nigeria's attempts to combat modern slavery through laws and policies, enforcement remains a challenge, calling for more determined efforts to translate laws into action (Walk Free, 2018). Governmental and non-governmental organizations are key in raising awareness and educating communities about the dangers of modern slavery. Empowering communities to recognize and report exploitation is crucial to fighting this issue (UNICEF, 2021).

Modern slavery is a widespread crisis with severe consequences for the most vulnerable, particularly children. This statement explores the impact of modern slavery on children's psychosocial health. In Ibadan, modern slavery

manifests in various forms, including child labor, human trafficking, and forced begging. This diversity adds complexity to understanding how these forms of exploitation affect the psychosocial health of children (ILO, 2021). The unique social dynamics of Ibadan might contribute to the prevalence of these practices. Children subjected to modern slavery often experience intense psychological stress. Witnessing or undergoing violence, coercion, or exploitation can lead to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Kaltner et al., 2019). A common outcome of modern slavery is forced separation from family and community, disrupting the social bonds that are crucial for healthy development. This separation can result in profound isolation, affecting children's ability to form trusting relationships (Stoiber & Kruger, 2018). Despite the seriousness of the problem, there's a lack of comprehensive studies on the specific impact of modern slavery on children in Bódija market, Ibadan. Existing research provides general insights into the issue but calls for more detailed examinations to understand the problem's specific nuances and variations. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of modern slavery on the psychosocial well-being of children in Bódija market, Ibadan. The specific objectives are:

- i. To determine the relationship between modern slavery and the psychological health of children in Bódija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.
- ii. To evaluate the relationship between modern slavery and the cognitive well-being of children in Bódija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.
- iii. To explore the relationship between modern slavery and the behavioral well-being of children in Bódija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Literature Review

Modern slavery has severe effects on various aspects of human life, significantly impacting vulnerable groups, especially children. Numerous studies emphasize the harmful effects of modern slavery on the mental well-being of children. According to Anderson and O'Connell (2019), children forced into labor or human trafficking often endure intense trauma, resulting in symptoms such as anxiety, depression, post-

traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and attachment issues (Baldwin et al., 2020). The violence, exploitation, and constant fear to which these children are exposed can cause major mental and emotional disturbances (Hossain et al., 2021). Research also shows that children subjected to modern slavery frequently experience cognitive disruptions. Coercive labor, human trafficking, and exploitation may lead to diminished cognitive performance, reduced academic achievements, and delays in developmental milestones (Kaltz et al., 2020; Blight & Wachs, 2019). Traumatic experiences and ongoing stress impede memory, focus, and problem-solving abilities.

Studies (Dovydaitis, 2010; Kiss et al., 2015) point to the prevalence of trauma and PTSD among children caught in modern slavery. Exposure to violence, exploitation, and separation from caregivers often leads to severe psychological effects. Research by Kiss et al. (2015) highlights the emotional distress, anxiety, and depression commonly found in children affected by modern slavery. These children often exhibit symptoms of mental distress due to the trauma and abuse experienced during exploitation. Multiple studies (Dovydaitis, 2010; Kiss et al., 2015) report behavioral problems among children subjected to modern slavery, such as aggression, withdrawal, social maladjustment, and trust issues, stemming from disrupted attachments and coercive environments. Findings also indicate cognitive impairments and developmental delays in these children, driven by limited education, disrupted growth, and insufficient cognitive stimulation.

In addition, research consistently demonstrates that children exposed to modern slavery face significant behavioral challenges. Forced labor, human trafficking, and exploitation often lead to behavior problems like aggression, withdrawal, conduct issues, and difficulties with social interactions (Huang et al., 2020; Kiss et al., 2018). The continuous stress and traumatic events interfere with the development of healthy behavior patterns. Similarly, studies show that children in modern slavery experience significant emotional struggles. Forced labor, human trafficking, and exploitation can result in emotional problems like heightened anxiety, depression, fear, guilt, shame, and a sense of helplessness

(Alvarez et al., 2020; Zimmerman et al., 2020). The exposure to traumatic events and ongoing stress deeply affects their emotional stability.

Several factors contribute to the varying degrees of psychological impact on children subjected to modern slavery. The age of the child, the duration of exploitation, types of abuse, and availability of social support play major roles in their mental health outcomes (Chuang et al., 2019). Younger children may respond differently to these conditions compared to adolescents. Factors that contribute to behavioral disruptions among children exposed to modern slavery include the nature and severity of exploitation, the presence of supportive relationships, access to mental health resources, and overall socioeconomic conditions (Huang et al., 2020; Kiss et al., 2018). A lack of stable environments and nurturing relationships aggravates these behavioral issues. Various factors determine the cognitive impact of modern slavery on children, including the length of exploitation, the age at which it began, educational opportunities, and support networks (Bryant et al., 2021). Limited access to education and exposure to violence hinder normal cognitive development processes. Multiple factors shape the emotional challenges that children subjected to modern slavery face, with the nature and length of exploitation, emotional support, protective factors, and cultural contexts all playing significant roles (Alvarez et al., 2020; Zimmerman et al., 2020). Lack of nurturing environments and experiences of abuse further intensify these emotional difficulties.

Interventions to mitigate the psychological effects of modern slavery on children are critical. Baldwin et al. (2020) suggest a trauma-informed approach that focuses on specialized mental health care and comprehensive support systems. Collaboration between non-governmental organizations, government bodies, and mental health experts is crucial for providing holistic assistance to affected children (Hossain et al., 2021). Addressing cognitive repercussions from modern slavery requires targeted interventions. Kaltz et al. (2020) stress the importance of educational programs and cognitive therapies to reduce the cognitive damage caused by exploitation. Access to quality education, counseling, and community-based support are essential in helping children

regain their cognitive well-being (Blight & Wachs, 2019). Strategies to address behavioral issues caused by modern slavery require trauma-informed care and specialized interventions like cognitive-behavioral therapy and social skills training. Establishing safe environments, fostering positive relationships, and offering mental health resources are critical for improving behavioral outcomes (Kiss et al., 2018). Similarly, addressing the emotional impact of modern slavery on children requires trauma-focused therapy, counseling, and psychotherapeutic approaches to reduce emotional distress. Creating safe spaces, providing emotional support, and offering culturally sensitive mental health services are crucial to improve emotional well-being (Zimmerman et al., 2020).

Methodology

The research design is a descriptive survey focused on the population of children in Bodija Market subjected to modern slavery. A sample size of 155 respondents was drawn using a purposive sampling technique, chosen for their willingness to participate and their relevance to the study. The primary research instrument was a self-developed questionnaire designed to evaluate the well-being of these children, divided into four sections: demographics, environmental factors, protective measures, and well-being assessment, using a four-point Likert scale. The validity of the questionnaire was ensured through literature review and expert feedback, while reliability was confirmed through a pilot test, yielding high Cronbach's Alpha scores across various scales. Data collection involved direct questionnaire delivery, with assurances of confidentiality to encourage participation, while statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software to examine the collected data for insights into the effects of modern slavery on children's psychosocial well-being in Bodija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Results

Hypothesis One: There is no statistical significant relationship between modern slavery and the psychological wellbeing of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Table 1: The Statistical Significant Relationship Between Modern Slavery and the Psychological Wellbeing of Children in Bodija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	DF	R	P	Remark
Modern Slavery	153	17.32	2.15	152	.504**	.000	Sig.
Psychological Wellbeing	153	16.79	2.04				

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 4.2.1 indicates a significant statistical link between modern slavery and the psychological health of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State, with a correlation coefficient of $r(152) = .504^{**}$ and a p-value less than .05. The mean value for modern slavery was found to be 17.32, with a standard deviation of 2.15. The mean for psychological well-being was 16.79, with a standard deviation of 2.04. Despite the positive correlation, the results suggest that this relationship is statistically significant, indicating a clear connection between modern slavery and the psychological well-being of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Hypothesis Two: There is no statistical significant relationship between modern slavery and the cognitive wellbeing of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Table 2: PPMC; The Statistical Significant Relationship Between Modern Slavery and the Cognitive Wellbeing of Children in Bodija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	R	P	Remark
Modern slavery	153	17.32	2.15	152	.755**	.000	Sig.
Cognitive Wellbeing	153	17.03	2.01				

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 2: indicates that there is a statistically significant connection between modern slavery and the cognitive well-

being of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State, with a correlation coefficient of $r(152) = .755^{**}$ and a p-value below .05. The mean for modern slavery was found to be 17.32, with a standard deviation of 2.15. The mean for cognitive well-being was 17.03, with a standard deviation of 2.01. This result confirms that although there's a positive correlation between these factors, the relationship is statistically significant. Thus, it implies that modern slavery has a significant impact on the cognitive well-being of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Hypothesis Three: There is no statistical significant relationship between relationship between modern slavery and the behavioural wellbeing of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Table 3: PPMC; The Statistical Significant Relationship Between Relationship Between Modern Slavery and the Behavioural Wellbeing of Children in Bodija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	R	P	Remark
Modern slavery	153	17.32	2.15	152	.670**	.000	Sig.
Behavioural wellbeing	153	20.44	2.13				

*Correlation is significant at 0.05(2-tailed)

Table 4.2.3 shows a statistically significant connection between modern slavery and the behavioral well-being of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State, with a correlation coefficient of $r(152) = .670^{**}$ and a p-value below .05. The mean for modern slavery was calculated to be 17.32 with a standard deviation of 2.15. Meanwhile, the mean for behavioral well-being was 20.44, with a standard deviation of 2.13. The results confirm a positive relationship between these variables, indicating that the correlation is statistically significant. This means there is a notable relationship between modern slavery and the behavioral well-being of children in Bodija market, Ibadan, Oyo State.

Discussion

The first research hypothesis, which stated there is no significant link between modern slavery affecting cognitive well-being and the psychological health of children in Bodija Market, Ibadan, Oyo State, was found to be incorrect. The results actually indicated a notable relationship between these two factors. This aligns with the idea that cognitive well-being is crucial for children's overall health. Bryant et al. (2021) found that unstable environments and a lack of nurturing relationships intensify behavioral issues. Several factors influence the varied effects of modern slavery on children's cognitive well-being, including the duration and severity of exploitation, the age at which it began, access to education, and support networks. The absence of educational opportunities and exposure to violence disrupts normal cognitive development. Alvarez et al. (2020) and Zimmerman et al. (2020) point out that the nature and length of exploitation, availability of emotional support, protective factors, and cultural contexts significantly affect emotional outcomes. A lack of nurturing environments and abusive experiences intensifies emotional difficulties.

These results also align with Kaltz et al. (2020), who stress the importance of educational programs and cognitive remediation therapies to address cognitive deficits resulting from exploitation. Blight and Wachs (2019) emphasize that quality education, counseling services, and community support are key to restoring cognitive health.

The second research hypothesis showed a significant correlation between modern slavery affecting behavioral well-being and the psychological health of children in Bodija Market. This finding is consistent with Huang et al. (2020) and Kiss et al. (2018), who found that children subjected to modern slavery often experience disruptions in their behavior, such as aggression, withdrawal, conduct issues, and challenges in social interactions. According to Alvarez et al. (2020) and Zimmerman et al. (2020), traumatic events and prolonged stressors disrupt the development of healthy behavioral patterns, leading to issues like aggression and social withdrawal. Huang et al. (2020) highlight the need for trauma-informed care and specialized interventions, including cognitive-behavioral therapies and social skills training, to

address these behavioral challenges. Kiss et al. (2015) identified several factors that exacerbate behavioral issues, including traumatic exploitation, abuse, coercion, and the absence of supportive environments.

The third research hypothesis indicated a significant relationship between modern slavery affecting social well-being and the psychological health of children in Bodija Market. Zimmerman et al. (2018) note that children in slavery often face isolation, mistrust, and social exclusion. The isolation caused by separation from family, limited social interactions, and exploitation leads to difficulty forming healthy relationships and impaired social skills. Kiss et al. (2015) found that children subjected to modern slavery struggle with trust issues due to their traumatic experiences, making it challenging to build healthy and trusting relationships with authority figures, peers, and caregivers. The lack of nurturing environments in modern slavery further impedes the development of social skills and emotional regulation in children. Studies by Kiss et al. (2015) and UNICEF (2017) show that children affected by modern slavery often have trouble managing emotions, communicating effectively, and engaging in positive social interactions.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that there are significant relationships between modern slavery and various aspects of children's well-being. Specifically, the study found strong correlations between modern slavery's impact on cognitive, behavioral, social, and overall psychosocial well-being with children's psychological health. Modern slavery encompasses a range of exploitative practices such as child labor, human trafficking, forced begging, and domestic servitude. These persist due to a mix of socio-economic factors, weak enforcement, and inadequate legislation. Economic issues in Nigeria contribute heavily to the spread of modern slavery among children, with poverty pushing families into desperate situations, increasing the risk of children being exploited for survival. The study also indicated that without proper education and support, children are at greater risk of engaging in dangerous labor or being exploited by traffickers offering false promises. The following recommendations were suggested to combat the problems of

modern slavery and improve children's psychosocial well-being:

- ❖ Children should have closer parental supervision to reduce exposure to modern slavery, which takes on many forms, including child labor, human trafficking, and forced begging.
- ❖ Social workers should develop programs to raise awareness among parents and policymakers about the effects of child exploitation, focusing on the impact on children's psychosocial well-being.
- ❖ Parental education level plays a significant role in mitigating factors that lead to modern slavery, suggesting the need for educational programs for parents.
- ❖ Educational programs should address the consequences of modern slavery and the lasting effects of violence, exploitation, and abuse on children's mental health. These programs could provide practical strategies to prevent child trafficking, one of the most recognizable forms of modern slavery.
- ❖ Family-based interventions can guide parents on how to manage their children during adolescence while balancing the need for autonomy with protecting them from exploitation.
- ❖ Public awareness campaigns that promote the importance of parent-child relationships should be encouraged through media advertisements and informational materials in government agencies, public health offices, and schools, providing alternatives to modern slavery's exploitative practices.

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