

GENDER MIGRATION AND TRAFFICKING IN PERSON IN SELECTED NIGERIAN FILMS

Stella U. Nwofor

&

Tracie C. Utoh-Ezeajugh

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

su.nwofor-molokwu@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

Trafficking in person is a heinous crime which has received considerable attention from the Nigerian government and various advocacy groups such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Person (NAPTIP) because of its exploitative nature on the lives of the citizens and image of the country. This has pushed many Nigerians into prostitution, forced labour, untimely deaths and other dehumanizing criminal activities associated with it. The media over the past few years have reported cases of trafficking with a higher percentage of these cases directly or indirectly linked to the high rate of local and international emigration attributed to the current economic downturn and high rate of insecurity in the country. Although male and female migrants fall prey to traffickers, recent research has proven that female migrants are more vulnerable to abuse and trafficking in the course of migration because of their biological sexual configurations. Hence, this study explores the intersections between migration, gender and trafficking in the Nigerian space. Employing the purposive sampling technique of the qualitative research methodology, the two migration-themed films were selected and content-analyzed. Using Crenshaw Kimberley's theory on Intersectionality for analysis, findings reveal that female migrants are the major victims of trafficking in Nigeria.

Keywords: Migration, Gender, Trafficking, Nollywood films

Introduction

The study of migration and the offshoots of migration activities has become very necessary in Nigeria due to the volume of migratory activities in the country. This is because international migration has become the popular alternative for the average Nigerian youth and many middle-class professionals for surviving the economic downturn and the huge problem of insecurity in the country. "Japa" a phenomenon that has recently found its way into the Nigerian migration lexicon has become the new craving, the new reality and the

new creed for many Nigerian youths who seek to make ends meet. “Japa” which literally means “to flee” in the Yoruba language has become the Nigerian expression of migration drive which in itself has become very popular among the youths and the middle class in very recent times. The “Japa” reality in Nigeria is best captured in the October 2022 article by Peterside Dakuku titled ‘Exodus of the Next Generation, Time for Real Concern’. According to Peterside:

The recent wave of Nigerians relocating out of the country represents the largest movement of people out of the country since the end of the civil war, over fifty years ago. What is significant is the profile of those who are relocating. They are primarily skilled youth, including doctors, nurses, IT engineers, university lecturers and technicians. (par. 6)

However, this is not to say that international migration is new to Nigerians, rather, what this implies is that there is a wide spread craving, a re-awakened drive among the youths who constitute the student emigrant group and the middle class who constitute the skilled workers group in the Nigerian migration flow. The preponderance of these cravings in recent times is massively caused by the increased poverty and near hopelessness which have bedeviled Nigeria since the seeming collapse of its economy that has resulted in massive job losses and youth unemployment in the country. Thus, post -Covid Nigeria has witnessed a massive emigration of Nigerians to countries with seeming job openings. The increasing attention to the study of migration has even become more significant not because international migration has just started in Nigeria, but more as a result of the escapist mentality that seems to govern the emigration drive. There seems to be a growing but tacit belief that Nigeria is a killer of dreams among the youths and the middle class. The implication is that the country with its numerous challenges can no longer proffer hope to its citizen and this inadvertently drives the hunger to emigrate and prosper. In effect, most individuals and families who can afford the cost and hassles seem most likely prepared to leave the country. Thus Phillip Connor and Ana Gonzalez-Barrera (2019) in their publication for *Pew Research* discovered that in Nigeria which is Africa’s most populated country, about 45 percent of the adults plan to leave the country within the next five years. This according to them is the highest share out of the twelve countries they surveyed within the four continents of Africa, Asia, Europe and North America. Apart from the migration to other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the United Kingdom due to its comparative ease of visa issuance has become the popular migration target in the country.

Migration in Nigeria is mostly occasioned by economic factors. The need to make ends meet and improve the economic situation of families and dependents play a very important role in the Nigerian migration pattern. This is not to say that this is the sole motivation or push/pull factor of migration in the country, however, most voluntary migrations within the

country are economy induced. This factor is very applicable to both the intra and international migration experiences in the country. Numerous scholars agree that poverty in Nigeria which results from poor leadership and bad management of available resources acts as a tremendous migration push mostly among the youth population in the country. Nwosu et al (2022) put it succinctly;

Nigeria has abundant and varied resources which portray it as a rich nation. Most times these resources are mismanaged, pushing the inhabitants to extreme poverty. As the poverty is biting hard and the population is increasing, the people seek for various strategies to survive. One of such strategies is migration, an age-old strategy for human survival. (Par. 1)

The worsening insecurity in the country has also contributed immensely to the renewed migration energy in the country. The incessant killings arising out of ethno-religious crises and the widespread criminality that has gained tremendous boldness most especially since the End Sars uprising has made the country very unattractive to many. The problem of insecurity has a tremendous impact on both the local and international migration patterns in the country. The constant attack of local communities in the North East region and some communities in the Middle Belt has seen the regions massively abdicated with the locals in constant move in search of peaceful settlements. The attacks in the North East which is majorly as a result of the activities of the Boko Haram terrorist groups have seen to the internal displacement of communities most of whom now live in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps waiting for opportunities to either return to their homes or move to other regions with seeming calmness and peace. The incessant clashes between the Fulani marauding herders and the indigenous crop farmers in the Middle Belt part of the country on the other hand result in the displacement and consequent migration of the local population to more serene environments in the South. The South East too with its restiveness owing to the activities of the ‘unknown gun men’ has seen many movements out of the region in search of serenity and safety. These pockets of restiveness and violence have gradually metamorphosed into commercialized criminalities. The continued kidnap of individuals and groups for ransom in the country is what has become a major scare to the middle-class group many of whom have chosen to settle in countries with stable peace. Another implication is that many migrants now find it difficult to return to their local homes in Nigeria or even visit due to fear.

Amidst these conflagrations and lawlessness, many middle-class citizens with good resources tend to seek shelter beyond the boundaries of Nigeria in search of permanent peace and stability. This is what has contributed to the increased international migration of skilled and middle-class workers to countries like Canada, U.S.A., United Kingdom, and many other European and Asian countries where there are job openings for skilled workers.

The negative effect of this is that the country is experiencing a tremendous brain drain with many of its professionals migrating to countries with better economic and security promises. Espousing this position, Augusto and CO opine; “As a result of the ravaging insecurity of life and property, Nigerians are fleeing the country for safer, relatively more prosperous, socially inclusive cities” (3)

Having become a reality that significantly impacts the country both positively and negatively, it is then very important to dutifully understudy and understand the implications of migration and its vagaries on all the material elements involved in the migration process. One of the very important areas of these elements is gender. This is because human relations and experiences are sometimes dependent on sociological attitudes to the elements of difference. Gender which is one of these elements of difference in human configuration has become widely studied and applied in virtually every facet of human endeavour. The study of gender attempts to understand the unique experiences of individuals as a result of their biological configurations and sexual dispositions. The combination of migration and gender in this study is an attempt at understudying the impartations of gender on the experiences of migrants. The implication is that the study expects that the experiences of men in migratory situations are most likely different from those of women as a result of their sexual configurations. Thus, the whole process of migration starting from the ideation to the choices of routes and other factors of migration are largely impacted by gender. More so, migration process is sometimes not without ugly and bizarre experiences that leave lasting trauma on the migrants. This is mostly witnessed among migrants who attempt the migrant journey through irregular means. As a result, the migrants are subjected to treatments which sometimes may be undignifying and inhuman. Just like the men, the women in these situations also go through hardships, subjugations, oppression, and dehumanization which sometimes are gender-specific. Recent studies have proven that women and young girls are more susceptible to abuse and easily fall victims to human traffickers. According to Jorgen Carling (2006),

The widespread wish to emigrate, combined with the obstacles, create favourable conditions for trafficking. Young women often have a low level of education and even less possibilities than men in the local labour market. Besides, families are often favourably disposed to seeing the women emigrate because they often show more consideration towards the family than emigrating men, and become an important resource to the family members back home in Nigeria. The prostitution market in Europe makes it attractive to traffickers to facilitate the emigration of young women despite the high costs and great obstacles. Women do not normally themselves have the financial and organizational resources nor the necessary contacts needed to travel. (24)

This study in effect, is an exercise in understanding how femininity impacts the experiences of women in migration circumstances. Films have been selected as objects of study for eliciting the subject of interest in this research. The choice of the instrument of film is predicated on its importance in the recreation of experiences and narrations of human life. Film is literature and basically tells stories from varying perspectives. The implication is that films are creations and recreations of human beliefs, cultures and relations. Film functions as human memories, a reflection of what man is and what he aspires to become. In the words of Istiak Mahmood (2013), it is “an account of societal, economic and political set up in which a person is living”. (77) The centrality of film in human narration therefore makes it apt for the study of human relations, beliefs, cultures and dreams. It is in line with this that the choices of Teru Ekuere’s *In a Strangeland* (2018) and Great Valentine Edochie’s *Love in Hopeless Place* (2024) were made to ascertain the role migration plays in the sustenance of trafficking in persons especially, the female gender.

The films selected for this study are all Nigerian films and are basically themed on Nigerian citizen migration experiences, both locally and internationally. Nollywood representations of the Nigerian people go a long way in mirroring life, projecting ideas and critiquing social situations in Nigeria. Thus, through a critical analysis of the two films under study, the researchers will argue that the recent increase in migration has fuelled the proliferation of the trafficking of young women in Nigeria.

Gender Migration in Nigeria

Gender perspective has become a major preoccupation in various sociological interdisciplinary researches. This helps to give more insights and arrive at an unbiased research result, devoid of stereotypes. In recent times, a good number of discourses in migration have centred on the socially constructed gender binaries and positionings, as well as, their responses to mobility outcomes. Austin A. Mardon et al state that “gender sways the reasons of migration experience such as various narratives of migration; how and where to migrate? What are the networks for migration? Who migrates? Gender and community differences also shape the risk, and vulnerabilities of migration”. (7) Whether forced, consensual, or somewhere in between, gender is at the centre of any discussion of the reasons for and effects of migration. Migration being not gender-neutral, poses different opportunities, risks, and challenges for men as well as women in all aspects of the process. Although men and women usually migrate for similar reasons such as; to advance their education, remunerative employment, join their spouses, and flee persecution or violence as refugees, yet, women experience migration differently from men. The experience of female migrants according to Okoronkwo Ethelbert, “reproduces and reinforces pre-

existing gender patterns that dominate and oppress women as gender is the basic factor that influences migrants labour at destination.” (36)

Prior to recent times, Migration has been commonly regarded as a male phenomenon. In a typical primordial Nigerian setting, men were saddled with the responsibilities of providing food, water, shelter, and every other need of their immediate family while women bore and nurtured both the children and the husbands. Gender norms in Nigeria just as in other African societies greatly affected the decisions to migrate. This arrangement placed the men always on the move within and outside their environment, in search of resources while the women manned the home front. Mobility for women at the time was majorly orchestrated by marriage which in most cases was done internally (rural-rural migration). In addition to this, Okoronkwo et al also captured that Igbo women back in the pre-colonial days engaged in farming and other agricultural practices for livelihood and to help their families. According to their report, “women moved to other areas within the region due to scarcity of farmland or fertile farmlands.” (36) Hausa as well as Yoruba women in history also migrated to various geographical areas for marriage, economic considerations, and religious purposes. Akinwale Akeem reports that “despite the Islamic practice of seclusion of women, many women migrants exist in Hausa land including the Hausa women who migrated to cities in the company of their husbands and non-Hausa women migrants in northern Nigeria.” (83)

Western colonialism which gave rise to formal education and urbanization brought many changes in economic roles, and thus advanced the participation of women in migration flows with their presence in almost all regions and all types of mobilities independently, leaving behind the traditional pattern associated with earlier ages. George F. Masanja explained that “The gendered division of family labour has also been upset by the loss of male employment through urban job retrenchment and structural adjustment, forcing women to seek additional income-generating activities to support the family.” This aspect has triggered rural-urban migration for females.” (84). In addition, Gabriela Pombo clarifies that,

Traditional approaches have studied migration without considering a gender perspective. Women have been made invisible in the study of migration pathways or they have been reduced to the role of companions or dependents in the decisions made by men (fathers, husbands). Under the premise that the dynamic factor in relocation is represented by men, the implicit subject when addressing migration has historically been male. The migration of the young migrant worker embodied the paradigmatic image of autonomy, while women’s migration was linked to images of association, due to its connection to family relationships in terms of the purpose and destination of migration...This implied a lack of awareness of

women's experiences and subordinating their migration motives to those of men, as well as disregarding their paid work and over-emphasizing their roles as reproducers and housewives. (79)

In the past few decades, migration flows have diversified and feminized; considering the hike in the number of women and girls who engage in both rural and international mobilities yearly. Recent reports have it that about 49 per cent of migrants in Nigeria are women and girls. Typically, most unskilled women dominate the rural-rural migration pattern for advanced farming activities and petty trading, domestic servitude, and white-collar jobs while the skilled ones embark on urban and international migration. The feminization of migration has also stemmed from the demand for women-oriented services including that of domestic workers, nurses, teachers and other professions typically dominated by women. Women in Nigeria are presently moving more independently than ever to meet their families' financial needs. Mbiyozo summarizes that "historically women have had less autonomy over migration choices. Now more are migrating independently for work, education, and as heads of households to meet their own or their families' economic needs. The overall rise in the number of African women migrants is linked to the increasing role they play as economic beings." (11) Thus, the role women play in domestic service has been found to facilitate the migration of women into cities and accelerate their adaptation to urban life. (Okoronkwo et al., 2022) Nevertheless, women and girls are unlikely to advance their migration interests as much as men do due to their family interferences associated with culture.

All categories of migrants such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), forced migrants, internal economic migrants, international migrants and asylum seekers, young women experience multiple vulnerabilities in their destination countries due to their documentation status, language barrier and ignorance of their rights and privileges. In some cases, they are abused mentally, and physically while being subjected to work for very long hours. Of all the vulnerabilities that accrue from migration, trafficking remains the most discussed aspect and as a result, the International Organization of Migration (IOM) has invested over a billion US dollars on intervention programmes only in Africa. This appears to be a central preoccupation of migrant women and children. Trafficking as defined by the United Nations quoted in Ingrid Palmay means, The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons by means of the use of threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or 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 the purpose of exploitation. (53) Trafficking in Nigeria affects both boys and girls. Trafficked males just like the females are exploited sexually as well as for domestic servitude, forced criminality, forced begging, organ harvesting, drug

mules, baby factories, and all kinds of forced labour. Recent research suggests that most cases of trafficking in Nigeria have been traced to women and girls on both internal and international migrations. Susan Schmidt believes that gender informs the level of risk a person is exposed to in the migration process. She notes that “one review of research on sexual abuse found that girls face 2.5 to 3 times higher risk than boys...while a global meta-analysis of child sexual abuse found an 18 per cent prevalence rate for females in comparison to 7.6 per cent for boys.” (79) The International Labour Organization (ILO) classifies sex trafficking as modern slavery and reported as quoted in Ernest-Onuiri P. et al that, “globally in 2016 there were 24.9 million people trapped in forced labour, with 4.8 million persons in forced sexual exploitation...women and girls account for 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry.

Theoretical framework

This study is hinged on the sociological theory of intersectionality, propounded by an African-American lawyer and human rights activist, Kimberley W. Crenshaw in the year 1989 as a framework that recognizes certain overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination against a group of people, based on social backgrounds, experiences and many other factors. Intersectionality recognizes the reality that people experience in life, discrimination, and sometimes benefits based on the number of different identities that exist in their environment. This idea emanated from her observations of how courts in America framed and interpreted the stories of black women plaintiffs with so much discrimination evident in their judgments. In her seminal work, *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics*, Crenshaw observes that black women experience discrimination differently from the whites, hence posits that the “adoption of a single-issue framework for discrimination not only marginalizes black women within the very movements that claim them as part of their constituency but it also makes the illusive goal of ending racism and patriarchy even more difficult to attain”. (152) By this assertion, she recognizes the uselessness of addressing all issues of oppression in one breath because white and black women experience oppression differently due to their disparities in race, class, religion, economic standings, and orientation. For instance, black women mostly suffer dual or multiple oppressions; first is racial, second is gender and the third is class. Anne Carastathis referred to the above classifications as “double jeopardy or multiple jeopardy and interlocking oppressions. (305)

In defining the term intersectionality, Crenshaw means “the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarding as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or

disadvantage.” (1). It takes into cognizance specificity, as it beams its light at the crossroads at which different marginalized identities overlap: be it class, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, religion, etc. It is basically a reaction from Crenshaw against “a problematic consequence of the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive categories of experience and analysis.” (139)

Feminist ideology on the application of intersectionality is a tool for conceptualizing the relation between the systems of oppression which construct their identities and social locations in hierarchies of power and privileges. In agreement, Bastia Tanja accounts that;

Intersectionality was proposed as an alternative approach aimed at challenging the essentializing notions present in identity politics, which implicitly assumed that ‘white, middle-class women or black men [are] the exemplary victims of systems of sexism or racism’ (Prins 2006:278). Such essentializing notions inevitably led to the obscuring of intra-group differences: ‘[in] the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experiences is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class’. (1242)

From the foregoing, this theory has been critically utilized by several scholars as a tool to draw attention to the different oppressive circumstances in which people have found themselves. Thus, intersectionality is a metaphor and theory that redresses oppression as well as, shows the intersections between cultural identities, critical studies, and ill social behavioural acts especially against a specific group. The application of the intersectionality theory in this research will aid in interrogating the intersections of gender, class, and migration in the trafficking discourse. Hence, warrants a critical standpoint on the representation of these issues as images in Nollywood narratives and its effects on Nigerian female migrants. Just as it has been described above that intersectionality addresses the different aspects and ideas of oppression, most especially, the interconnectedness with migration, gender, cultural ideologies, and social identities, the ultimate idea of Intersectionality in the context of this study is to establish the fact that, the biological configurations of migrants, to a large determine the extent of their susceptibility to abuse, hence, confirms female migrants as more vulnerable to the scourge of trafficking.

Great Valentine Edochie’s Love in Hopeless Place (2024): A Synopsis

This film as directed by Great Valentine Edochie tells the story of Lizzy, who ventures into the trafficking business. This made her travel to her village, Umuoma after so many years of living in Lagos to look for young girls. Unfortunately for her, most of the young girls had gone to stay with their relatives in the city while the remaining she wasn’t able to convince them. She then resorted to taking her older sister’s daughter with the promise

to train her in her fashion designing business. Uloaku, who hawks food items for her mother in the market was so thrilled by this offer, that hence agrees to leave with her aunty to Lagos. Upon their arrival in Lagos, Aunty Lizzy convinced Uloaku to join her Friend Madam Ronke in her fashion house with the promise that she would be paid while she was still learning. Lizzy transfers Uloaku to Madam Ronke at a price and advises her to be loyal and obedient to her madam.

Uloaku, who is ignorant of her mission in Madam Ronke's house at first is thrilled with the good things that she receives from her madam, not knowing that she is being prepared for the task ahead. Madam Ronke places so much value on Uloaku because of her virginity, hence reserves her for her very important and rich customers.

Uloaku did not hesitate to resist the men that her madam threw at her to service because that was not her initial plan when she left the village for the city. She was insistent on doing the fashion designing job and not prostitution. Uloaku's attitude towards Madam Ronke's big customers got them irritated, as they lashed Madam Ronke while asking for a refund of the money they paid to her. In this fury and disappointment, madam Ronke mobilized her boys to deal with Uloaku in order to set her in the mood for the business. Uloaku in a downcast state had to align to the dictates of her madam somehow in order to escape from her wrath. Her name was changed to Aliyah to fit into the business. On one of the nights, Madam Ronke hooked Uloaku and her fellow inmates to service her clients for three days. There she met Clinton, a guy who came in from the United States. He noticed her naivety and her why she was involved in that kind of business. She narrated her ordeal to him and how her madam forces girls into prostitution against their will, so he promised to help her come out of her madam's net. Clinton contacted his lawyer friend who arranged for the arrest of Madam Ronke. Clinton being thrilled by Uloaku's culinary skills and decency, hired her as his steward and also enrolled her in a fashion school. Uloaku had the opportunity to visit her mother in the village and narrate her experiences. Uloaku's stay in Clinton's house revived her life as Clinton helped her to improve her spoken language, craft and confidence. They both fell helplessly in love with each other.

Migration and Trafficking in *Love In Hopeless Place* (2024)

This film reemphasizes the scourge of sex trafficking and its ravaging effects on the lives of Nigerian girls and the overall image of the nation. Although it captures the practice of trafficking and its connectedness with rural-urban migration in Nigeria, it further gives an in-depth glimpse into the activities of trafficking agents, their strategies and mode of oppression, as well as the ordeals of the innocent trafficked girls in the hands of their bosses (who are their owners until they offset their debts). The film tries to give more details about "the private moments, the everyday struggles, the complex power dynamics,

the strength and dignity” (12) of these young girls in a quest for survival.

The sex trafficking industry popularly known as a 99- billion-dollar industry, has exposed many young Nigerian women to modern-day slavery in the diaspora and within the nation. The most interesting yet exasperating angle to this exposition remains that women are the key players in the trafficking of young girls within and outside Nigeria. Some function as local agents; who source and locate these young girls in their villages, and then convince them into accepting to take the bold steps of embarking on the convoluted escapade, with great assurances of better livelihood at their point of destination. Surprisingly, most of these agents are not strangers to these young girls; some turn out to be close relatives and acquaintances.

This is the reality of Uloaku, the protagonist in the film under analysis. She was stylishly trafficked by her aunt, who she believed had her best interest at heart. Uloaku’s mother wouldn’t have thought that her own younger sister could have thought of betraying her by selling her daughter into slavery. Likewise, most parents who give in to the antics of these traffickers do so based on trust. They chose to do that for the best interest of their children, not knowing what the future holds for them in their point of destination. In addition to this, some parents who have seen other young migrants succeed in the places where they went to, also wish to have their children migrate for a better future.

The traffickers who recruit young girls for trafficking come in the guise of successful business people who wish to alleviate the burdens and financial burdens of their people. In other words, they go to familiar environments, that is, places where they are well-known and where they know people. In the film, Lizzy who has not been visiting her sister in the village for many years decides to visit immediately she starts looking for girls to recruit. In her conversation with Madam Ronke, she expressed the reasons for her inability to gather more girls for her.

Lizzy: Haa! Eehm, you see, I couldn’t convince the ladies in my village to follow me. In fact, most of the girls that I know had already left for their relative’s houses in the city. So, I had to settle for my niece. I had to lie to the mother that she was coming with me to learn sewing.

This is a very wrong thing to do to a person who is close to you to the extent of trusting you with her daughter. The betrayal which is usually fuelled by greed breeds mistrust as seen in the case of Lizzy and her older sister as she eventually uncovers her evil intentions. Again, in the face of the current economic downturn in the nation, more girls and young women still fall victim to sex trafficking in a bid to support their families financially. According to Ifeoma Odinye,

There is an erroneous assumption that the money they earned would help in supporting their families. Thus, many girls are deceived, bought, sold, and

trafficked as sex workers. In some cases, girls who are unaware of the reason for being trafficked usually have mixed reactions or regrets when they are forced into prostitution. (41)

This film reveals that many people who engage in the trafficking of young girls are aware of their financial predicaments, so they take advantage of this to exploit them. This character is borne out of their unflinching desire to get rich not considering whose ox is gored. Greed and desperation for quick wealth define the reason why Madam Lizzy decides to sell off her niece into prostitution, even as a virgin. These women exploit the helplessness of these girls for self-aggrandizement. Likewise, Madam Ronke's insistence that Uloaku must do the prostitution job by using her boys to deal with her, was a monstrous attitude typical of desperation.

Similarly, these traffickers usually build an impregnable wall around their victims which does not enable them to break away easily. Madam Ronke held her girls in a sort of slavery, hence she was totally in control of their lives and activities. It is worthy to note here that, lack of agency of any sort for these young migrants empowers their traffickers to use them carelessly without regard and also keep them perpetually under slavery, a practice which is usually tantamount to Stockholm syndrome which keeps them according to Palmry, "become emotionally attached to their trafficker and choose to remain with him/her even if it means working under exploitative conditions..." (58) because of fear of the unknown. This was the case of some of the girls in Madam Ronke's custody. They seem unperturbed about the exploitative demands of their dehumanizing job. They've become so deliberate in carrying out Madam Ronke's orders just to make her happy. It appears that they are already used to their circumstance and have chosen to live by it.

Teru Ekuerehare's in a Strange Land (2018): A Synopsis

This film is partly set in the United Kingdom and Nigeria. It narrates the tales of Cynthia and her husband, Daniel Williams, a working-class Nigerian couple based in London with their two children. Having attained a managerial level in the Newspaper company where she works as an Editor-in-Chief, she finds it very cumbersome dealing with home chores and the demands of her children. Thus, she demanded from her friend, Clara, whose major work is to bring young girls from Africa into the United Kingdom for domestic servitude. Cynthia, who is in the habit of complaining and finding faults in every girl got to her insisted-on Clara getting her any girl at all with the next available flight from Nigeria.

Clara eventually brought Ifeoma, a young lady in her early twenties from Owerri in Nigeria with the promise to her parents that her madam would train her in a higher institution, just as she had trained her previous wards. Immediately after Ifeoma arrived in

London at the Williams, Clara started querying her attitude. She rejects her outright while claiming that “she doesn’t fit their standard.” Her husband and Clara try to encourage her to let the girl stay but she rather becomes so rude and unfriendly to her. Clara made Ifeoma’s stay in her house for almost one year a living hell for her by overlabouring her with chores, raining abuses on her at all times, hitting and searing her body with a hot iron. Ifeoma was denied access to school and the outside world neither was she allowed to communicate with anyone, not even the members of her family. She also accuses her of trying to seduce her husband. Ifeoma’s predicament in the house of the Williams leaves her always in a pensive and sad mood with so many regrets. One day, she had the privilege of talking to the black delivery man named Endy, who often waved at her through the window, whenever he came to their neighbourhood for delivery and he promised to help her. With the advice she got from Endy, she tries to steal the door key from Cynthia’s handbag which enabled her to escape from the house when they had gone out for work that day. Ifeoma’s disappearance got Cynthia and Clara so worried but they couldn’t report to the authorities because of the girl’s illegal stay in the country. Ifeoma on the other hand was very reluctant to report her case to the authorities because of her undocumented status and the fear of deportation. Endy gave shelter to Ifeoma and also connected her to the Nigerian High Commission in London which sorted her out and arrested Cynthia on account of Modern-day slavery and Clara for human trafficking.

Modern Day Slavery Exemplified in Teru Ekuereh’s in a Strange Land (2018).

Sanni-Ajose significantly depicted through her film the plight of some young African ladies during their sojourn abroad for labour to make ends meet for themselves and their families. The film gives an insight into the multiple and interlocking systems of subjugation meted out to female domestic servants based on their status as undocumented or smuggled migrants, females and poor girls.

As proposed by the Push-pull migration theory, Ifeoma was allowed to follow Clara to London because her poor parents in the village could no longer fund her education, hence they sought an alternative platform to give her a better life. It is no longer news that poverty is what pushes most of the poor families in rural areas to give their children out to work in other people’s houses as domestic servants. Globalization has contributed greatly to labour migration and facilitated female youths’ employment as live-in domestic workers due to their lack of other employment skills. Thus, the agents involved in the trafficking business are always sure to get these young people as often as they want them due to the level of poverty ravaging a good number of families in rural areas in Africa. This is why they are giving their customers assurances of getting more people whenever they demand them. In the case of Cynthia, Ifeoma was the fourth girl brought to her in the space of one

year and she was still complaining and demanding more. Clara knowing fully well how antagonistic her friend Cynthia could be and how badly she treats her wards, still goes ahead to bring more girls for her because she only cares about her pay. She deceptively lures these girls and their families with her fake promises of high expectations. She's able to do this because she is a known person in the village and not a stranger to them. One wonders how a woman will constantly keep deceiving her people and trading with her supposed daughters just for money with their welfare notwithstanding. The excerpt of the phone call between Cynthia and Clara explains this point.

Cynthia: Hello! Clara, what is this?

Clara: Please Cynthia, you said the next available flight.

Cynthia: Okay! I know that I asked you that I want anybody, but not that girl. She's a clown. She's acting like a clown. She asking too many questions. She's so inquisitive. I don't like her, Clara.

Clara: Look, I've done my part. The girl has been delivered to you. Pay my balance. Stop all these dramas.

Cynthia: (sighs) Whatever!

This film further reveals the abusive treatments these young women receive in the hands of the traffickers or employers. Although hiring a live-in domestic servant is not entirely bad if the employers reciprocate with more humane and generous gestures, it becomes a crime to treat a human being badly as in Ifeoma's case. Despite her loyalty, she got in return a slave-like treatment. Mrs. Cynthia right from the moment Ifeoma stepped her feet into her house despised her. She always reminded her of her poor status and threatened to kill her at the slightest provocation. Her hostility towards her got both Daniel and the children worried. Hence, Daniel warned her against her attitude towards Ifeoma.:

Daniel: Why can't you listen to me as your husband? I promise you, one day, you'll put yourself into trouble with this your attitude towards these girls. this is the fourth girl alone; this year and you'll complain. You'll look for the next to look after our kids.

Also, their first son always wonders why his mum maltreats and hates Aunty Ifeoma with so much passion. Thus, he asks his dad:

1st. Son: Daddy, I just wanna ask you a question.

Daniel: Okay.

1st. Son: why does mum not like Aunty Ify that much?

Daniel: it is nothing to worry about. It's just women's talk. Everything is going to be fine.

Mrs Cynthia's hostility towards Ifeoma extended to withholding her passport and refusing

her access to the outside world. This is typical slavery in modern times. She didn't mince words when she told her that she didn't come to London to study which was contrary to Madam Clara's promise to her parents in the village. Ifeoma was meant to clean her house and also take care of her children. Here is the excerpt of her conversation with Ifeoma:

Cynthia: It seems you don't know your duties in this house. Let me remind you again. You see in this house, we have six bedrooms, four of them for me and my children and two guest rooms. When last did you clean them?

Ifeoma: Yesterday or the day before yesterday.

Cynthia: you're meant to clean them every single day.

Ifeoma: But madam, where I used to work, the last place I worked, we used to clean every two two days. You know, that way we had little time to rest and study and sleep.

Cynthia: you're very stupid! Very very stupid! You see around this neighbourhood, we have big big houses, rich people and they have cleaners like you, househelps like you. So get on with your job. You're not here to study oo! You're here to work and I'll teach you very well. You see people like you, you can never do well in life because your own poverty is written all over you, inherited straight from your parents. You'll forever remain poor and look at you, so ungrateful. In fact, you're very ungrateful. You see someone like me, my own family went all the way to Nigeria to bring you here to better your life... you are very stupid...

Ifeoma: But madam Cynthia, this is not what Madam Clara told my mum oh! she told my parents that you're going to put me in school, the same thing you did for your last house-help. That's what Aunty Clara told my parents.

Cynthia: you're very stupid. Keep dreaming.

The oppressions that exist in the film "In a Strange Land" (2018) came with so much ferocity and vehemence perceived as unwarranted, unjust, abusive and disrespectful targeted at harming and stripping the victims, who were trapped in the vicious trap of irregular migration of their dignity. As Ebele Okpala rightly observes, "not all slave systems are centered on the control of agrarian labour. Some, just like women, might be providing administrative, domestic or sexual services." (180)

Conclusion

Storytelling through films aids the portrayal of the daily occurrences in a society in clear terms for the propagation, reconstruction and exportation of values and opinions to the

outside world. Nollywood films as a part of the Nigerian day-to-day media culture target influencing the thought patterns of its audience through the careful treatment of topical issues from different perspectives. Migration-themed Nollywood films have reported the numerous dimensions of migration as it concerns males and females in Nigeria. Hence, its treatment of migration as it relates to gender, the push and pull factors, rewards and hinderances that accrue from these arrangements as well as the impacts on the migrants. Nollywood in most cases present female migrants as passive, dependent and the more endangered specie, liable to abuse than their male counterparts, thereby reinforcing stereotypes of inferiority and servitude especially in cases of trafficking. This study thus concludes that Nollywood narratives on migration and trafficking resonates with the incessant real-life tales of the ordeals of young Nigerian girls' stock in the web of local and international traffickers and female domestic employers.

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