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## EDITORIAL DESK

The Journal of Contemporary Issues in Nigerian Economy stands as a beacon of scholarly excellence, drawing upon a diverse spectrum of researchers hailing from the expansive West African region and beyond. This volume showcases 14 meticulously researched articles curated from contributors in Nigeria and the United States of America. The genesis of these scholarly endives can be traced back to the auspicious conference convened at the Lagos State University Makanjuola Lecture Hall, held in December, 2023.

These articles, characterized by their depth and precision, underwent rigorous scrutiny during the conference, with over 90 participants actively engaging in critique. Subsequent to this extensive quality assurance regimen and plagiarism checks, only 14 articles successfully met the standards set forth by the esteemed guild of the editorial team, in strict adherence to international best practices.

It is with great pleasure that the Board of Editors announces the second edition of the publication schedule of the journal. Our heartfelt congratulations extend to the authors whose papers demonstrated exceptional merit and successfully navigated the rigorous selection criteria. To future researchers, we extend our encouragement to strive for greater heights in their scholarly pursuits.

The Board of Editors appreciates the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji Bello, mni NPOM for providing the enabling environment for the conference and her directives to the editorial team for strong quality assurance measures. We believe in your leadership and concerted efforts at ensuring high standards for the journal publication.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP  
Editor in Chief

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## THE DARK SIDE OF CAPITALISM: UNVEILING THE DAY SLAVERY EPIDEMIC

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### Abstract

*In today's capitalist society, a hidden epidemic of modern-day slavery persists, revealing the dark side of our economic system. Despite advancements in human rights, millions of people around the world are subjected to forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking and host of other vices. This exploitation occurs across various industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, and the sex trade. Vulnerable individuals, such as migrants and those living in poverty, are targeted and trapped in these exploitative conditions. The profits from this illicit trade are immense, making it a lucrative business for criminal networks. The theoretical anchorage for this discourse revolves around Karl Marx's theory of alienation, where forced and involuntary labour in which an employee lacks autonomy, authority, satisfaction of needs, enjoyment or happiness, and opportunity for personal or physical progress is referred to as alienated labour. A person has feelings of isolation, humiliation, unworthiness, and insignificance in this condition. Modern-day slavery comes in the form of child labour, bonded labour, trafficking, and domestic migrant workers. Children who are taken overseas or forced to work in cities are particularly susceptible to maltreatment and often lose contact with their families. To end modern-day slavery and defend the rights and dignity of every person, governments and international organisations must act decisively.*

**Keywords:** Capitalism, Child labour, Forced labour, Modern day slavery, Trafficking

### Introduction

The shadows of colonialism and the echoes of capitalism have left an indelible mark on the world, shaping the course of history and influencing the present in profound ways. One of the most devastating legacies of this influence is the persistence of modern-day slavery. Despite the abolition of transatlantic slavery in the 19th century, the scourge of forced labour, human trafficking, and exploitation continues to afflict millions of people around the globe. Colonialism, with its conquests, exploitation, and subjugation of indigenous populations, established the groundwork for the systematic dehumanization and commoditisation of human beings. The transatlantic slave trade, fuelled by the insatiable demand for cheap labour in the colonies, epitomized the brutal intersection of colonial expansion and capitalist enterprise. The economic imperatives of capitalism, driven by the pursuit of profit and the accumulation of wealth, perpetuated the abhorrent practice of enslavement, laying the groundwork for entrenched systems of oppression and exploitation that persist to this day.

The echoes of colonialism and capitalism reverberate through the contemporary landscape of modern-day slavery. From sweatshops in developing countries to domestic servitude in affluent households, from forced labour in supply chains to sexual exploitation in the shadows of the night, the manifestations of modern-day slavery are multifaceted and insidious (Bertocchi, 2016). The globalized economy, underpinned by the relentless pursuit of profit and the unequal distribution of wealth, perpetuates conditions conducive to exploitation and human trafficking.

The legacy of colonialism, marked by the devaluation of certain lives and the privileging of others, continues to shape power dynamics and perpetuate structural inequalities that render individuals vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.

Capitalism, often hailed as an engine of progress and prosperity, has undoubtedly brought about significant economic growth and innovation. However, beneath its shiny facade lies a dark side that is often overlooked - the day slavery epidemic. This hidden reality is a stark reminder that capitalism, if left unchecked, can perpetuate exploitation and human suffering (Wantchekon, 2011). Day slavery, also known as modern-day slavery or contemporary slavery, refers to the practice of individuals being forced to work under exploitative conditions with little or no pay, often trapped in a cycle of debt bondage. This form of slavery exists in various industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and domestic work, affecting millions of people worldwide.

One of the main drivers of day slavery is the insatiable demand for cheap labour. In pursuit of maximizing profits, companies often outsource their production to countries with weak labour regulations and enforcement mechanisms. This enables unscrupulous employers to exploit vulnerable individuals who have limited alternatives for employment. Migrants, refugees, and marginalized communities are particularly susceptible to falling victim to day slavery due to their precarious socio-economic circumstances (Wantchekon, 2011).

Moreover, capitalism accompanied by globalization and the interconnectedness of economies has fuelled the growth of supply chains that span multiple countries. While this has facilitated the flow of goods and services, it has also made it easier for unethical practices to go unnoticed. The modern day slavery epidemic is further perpetuated by the lack of effective legal frameworks and laws, making it easier for unscrupulous employers to exploit their workforce without fear of repercussions. Additionally, corruption and collusion between authorities and businesses contribute to the perpetuation of modern-day slavery. Furthermore, the demand for cheap goods by consumers in developed countries indirectly supports the day slavery epidemic. While consumers may be unaware of the exploitative conditions under which products are made, their purchasing choices contribute to the perpetuation of this vicious cycle.

In Britain, slavery was outlawed in 1807, and in the British colonies, it was outlawed in 1833. Slavery was declared illegal by the League of Nations Slavery Convention in 1926, and Article 4 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was approved in 1948, lists slavery and cruel treatment as violations of human rights. Lillich (in Meron, 1984) asserts that limitations on the particular article permitted by the applicable treaty or convention, as well as the status of the article (as defined by whether or not it is part of customary law under modern international law), can be used to determine the significance of a human right. Most people agree that the Universal Declaration contains elements of customary law, and there is even more agreement that the article on slavery—as well as the rights to life, equality before the law, freedom from torture and genocide, freedom from retroactive legislation, and arbitrary detention—is part of customary law (Meron, 1989).

Slavery has never been abolished, despite being prohibited by international law and several national constitutions. Slavery persists in many modern forms, even though the old type of slavery—which included abduction, slave trade, and forcing individuals to labour in chains—no longer accurately depicts current slavery. Anti-Slavery International states that the following shared traits set slavery apart from other human rights abuses. A slave is defined as follows:

- a. being coerced into working against their will through physical or mental threats.
- b. being owned or controlled by a “employer” through physical or mental abuse or threats of



- abuse.
- c. being dehumanised and treated like a commodity or purchased and sold as “property”.
- d. being physically restrained or having limitations placed on their freedom of movement (International Anti-Slavery, 1997).

According to Clegg and Foley (2020), the global economy plays a role in the causes of contemporary slavery. The emergence of the new slavery is associated with the unequal impacts of capitalism, which are partly caused by the transition from subsistence agriculture to cash-crop production and export-led growth (Clegg & Foley, 2020). Moreover, Clegg & Foley (2020) contends that “the new slavery mimics the global economy by focusing on control and use of resources or processes, rather than ownership and fixed asset management”. “Work for no pay and under the threat of violence” is another definition of new slavery (Clegg & Foley, 2020). In addition to violating the right not to be enslaved, slavery in its modern version also breaches several other rights, including the rights to freedom, property, and fair compensation for work. The majority of kinds of slavery are associated with violence and mental degradation, which violates the internationally recognised right to be free from torture and brutal and humiliating treatment.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical anchorage for this discourse revolves around Karl Marx's theory of alienation. Alienation, to Karl Marx, refers to the sense of separation or disconnection that workers experience in a capitalist system. Marx argues that alienation is a sign of capitalism and the industrial era. The employee is limited in what he can see and participate in throughout the task; he has no information or control over the finished result. This often clarifies the reasons for occurrences, their locations, and the hostile consequences they have on people or groups that are or were in appropriate in harmony. He also made remarks on how the capitalists adhere to these modes of production that benefit them and harm the people. The governing classes and the working classes were divided because of this tyranny. Marx (1976) referred to this practice as alienation, which meant that while working people gave their all at labour, they received very little in return, creating a class gap between them. Alienation impacts many facets of society, including politics, religion, the economy, and interpersonal relationships, but it has a particular impact on the workplace.

Marx described human freedom as the lack of alienation experienced by humans. He saw freedom and alienation as historical contradictions. Through productive work, which might be of an economic, social, artistic, intellectual, or scientific character, man exhibits his humanity. To show his creative potential, man as a subject alters the tangible things in his environment. Man's creative effort is distorted in a capitalist society, leading to his estrangement and alienation. Men in alienation societies relate to one another not as human beings do to one another, but rather as servants to their masters, exploited men to their exploiters, petitioners to privileged men, subordinates to superiors, and so on. Since the worker's alienation is inherent to his employment, it is the most severe kind of alienation. Alienation is a state rather than an action for the non-workers, the master, the owner, the idler, the priest, the philosopher, the general, or the king (Marx, 1976).

Marx identified four dimensions of estrangement: alienation from one's fellow humans, from the labour itself, from the output of one's labour, and from the human species itself. Because estrangement or alienation negates spontaneous, authentically human creative activity, it is a fundamental loss of freedom. First, in the capitalist system of production, the labourer is not the owner or controller of the goods created by his efforts. The wealth that the proletariat generates is not used by them. He feels cut off from his creation as a result. The life he has given the item turns

against him, behaving like an outside force. According to Braverman (1974), work itself turns into a commodity whose value is equivalent to the minimal amount needed for sustenance. The true owner of the wealth that he makes is the capitalist, who buys the proletarian's work force. Second, Marx argues that the worker's alienated connection to the outcome of his labour is only one expression of the productive activity's inherent alienation. The capitalist gives the labourer directions on what goods to create in exchange for a salary. Because he works in a factory owned and run by his bourgeois boss, he does not satiate any creative drive of his own, hence his labour is neither free nor choice. He is reduced to the position of a wage slave by the bourgeois system of private property. Thirdly, the proletariat becomes estranged from other humans as a consequence of alienated employment. As a consequence, there is animosity between employed and jobless workers since they see each other as foreign powers. In a similar vein, the employee perceives foreign powers making money off of his alienated labour in the owner and management. Therefore, capitalism destroys the foundation of true social relations. Fourthly, man becomes estranged from his species' life because of the three features of his alienation. Because the world of need rules his life and lowers him to the status of an animal, alienating man from himself, there is no place for the appreciation of literature, art, and cultural heritage (Edward, 2014). As a result, capitalism places all human abilities and characteristics within the constraints imposed by private property and capital ownership.

It was evident that the most alienated group in capitalist society were the members of the proletariat. However, Marx included capitalists in the definition of alienation along with all other social groups. Marx noted that the proletarian class and the propertied class “represent the same human self-alienation” in the “Holy Family”. However, the former is confident and at ease with their might, and they even seem to have a human existence. The latter perceives this estrangement as a wreck and recognises in it the reality of an inhuman life as well as its futility. Not less than the labourer, the capitalist himself submits to the despotic power of money. Because he is a victim of the fetishization of commodities and does not directly participate in any creative labour, the capitalist, who rides on the backs of the proletariat, likewise lives an alienated existence.

Both the slave and the person who enslaves him are equally unfree in a society built on enslavement. Marx thought that communism, which outlaws the creation of commodities, would enable humanity to completely transcend its situation of alienation (Yadav, n.d). There won't be any private property or alienated work under communism. Economic planning will eliminate the worker's current worry about physical existence by reversing the product's current hegemony over the worker and distributing goods by needs. The divide brought about by capitalism will be replaced by a new system of labour assignment that will allow each person to pursue their interests and abilities in a variety of creative and productive endeavours. Because the working class cannot eradicate alienation without also eliminating the capitalist mode of production, the working class in capitalist society cannot expect to attain its independence.

### **Contemporary Forms of Slavery**

The worst kinds of child labour, forced marriage, bonded labour, human trafficking, and mistreatment of domestic migrant workers are examples of modern forms of slavery. These days, the number of persons participating is several times greater than that of the transatlantic slave trade. Because modern slavery is illegal, accurate figures on the subject are difficult to get. However, according to Kevin Bales, there are an estimated 27 million modern slaves (Bales, 1999). Up to 200 million, according to some international non-governmental organisations. There are more instances of 18 Contemporary Slavery, such as child labour or bonded labour, than there are persons ensnared in modern forms of slavery overall since most of the research on the subject focuses on a single kind of slavery at a time.

### **Child Slavery**

It is well recognised that human trafficking still occurs in West Africa, on the region once known as the slave coast. Children are being coerced into household labour, compelled to work in marketplaces, and sold both inside and beyond national boundaries, all in the name of cheap agricultural labour. More than 200,000 children are reportedly trafficked each year in West and Central Africa, according to UNICEF estimates. Child slavery generates substantial revenue in nations such as Benin and Togo. Parents in poverty are duped into selling their kids to slave dealers. A local UNICEF worker explains: 'People come and offer the families money and say that their children will work on plantations and send money home. They give the family a little money, from \$15 to \$30 – and then they never see their children again (Bales, 2001).

Children trafficked abroad or made to work in the city are more vulnerable to abuse and will often lose touch with their families. Latin American working children have also been affected negatively by globalization. In this case the link with globalization is that the Latin American economies have been very unstable as a result of financial crises. With the increasingly free flow of capital, speculation can harm currencies overnight. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) estimates that in 1995 at least 120 million of the world's children between the ages of five and 14 did full-time paid work (ILO, 1996). Many of them worked under hazardous and unhygienic conditions and for more than ten hours a day (Basu, 1999). Some see child labour as part of a tradition or part of a culture whereas others argue that it is linked to a phase in economic development. After all, child labour was widespread in Western Europe from the age of the Industrial Revolution and in the USA from the mid-nineteenth century (Basu, 1999).

However the worst cases of child labour violate many other fundamental human rights. There is a widespread consensus that poverty is the main cause of child labour in developing countries (Johnson, Hill & Ivan-Smith, 1995). However, in addition to poverty, there is a complex of factors at work in the causation of child labour. Save the Children lists the interaction of micro- and macro-economic, environmental, social, cultural and political factors.

### **Bonded Labour**

Another contemporary forms of slavery is the case of bonded labour. Bonded labour has existed for centuries in countries like India, Pakistan and Nepal. Although national legislation (often even at the level of the constitution) outlaws it, many families are indebted for huge sums of money and pass on the debt from generation to generation. The system has feudal connotations in that the landowners take on a paternalistic role towards their bonded labourers. They will provide food and some form of security. In one case, a debt-bonded labourer was able to buy himself free, but returned into bondage out of choice. The reason for preferring to belong to the landowner was the safety of living according to the same rules as he had always lived. This example is not an isolated case; regularly freed bonded labourers return to their previous conditions of bondage. The deeply rooted practices need to be combated not only through government policies to abolish them, but also through measures of support and aid in finding alternative livelihoods. This implies the need for support beyond legal and economic measures, for example through projects providing emotional and educational support (Bales, 2002).

### **Trafficking**

Another form of contemporary slavery that has increased exponentially recently is trafficking. Women from Central and Eastern Europe and from the former Soviet Union, including the Central Asian republics, are being trafficked into Western Europe and the Far East. Many governments still conflate trafficking with undocumented migration, particularly into prostitution. Part of the problem is the definition of trafficking. The definition of trafficking used here is based on definitions used by the UN, UNICEF and the International Organization for



Migration (IOM). Forced migration or forced work after consented migration counts as trafficking, whereas consented legal travel is called migration and consented but illegal travel is smuggling. However, the notion of consent is highly contested, with some feminist lobby groups arguing that all prostitution should be considered trafficking, whereas others, like Doezeema (2002), hold that coercion is a necessary element of the definition of trafficking. The former position views trafficking as merely linked to prostitution; the type of work trafficked people end up doing is often in the sex industry but not always.

The immediate link between slavery in this perspective and trafficking is, once again, increased poverty during the economic transition towards capitalism. Whereas work was guaranteed under socialism, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, unemployment has risen enormously and the majority of the unemployed are female (Clegg, 2020). Even people in work often do not receive their wages, thus poverty has increased dramatically as capitalism revolves around the increasingly free flow of capital is not accompanied by the free flow of people.

### **Domestic Migrant Workers**

This is also another form of slavery that takes place right under the noses of Western citizens. Domestic migrant workers regularly suffer abuse by their employers, often without having access to remedies. The law in Britain and many other European countries and the US, allowed diplomats to bring a servant if that was part of their culture. Servants were allowed into the country on the passport of their employer, so they did not have a visa to stay in the country legally if they left this employer. This made it especially hard for them to escape from an abusive situation. However, evidence shows that many domestic migrant workers are still prevented from leaving the house; they have to work all hours suffer violence and lack of food or a warm place to sleep. Their mental well-being is completely disregarded; they are treated as less than human. In one case in France, the woman domestic migrant worker could not read or write and did not have a sense of time or seasons once she was freed (Sven & Rockman, 2016). Capitalism cannot be delinked from these acts. First, poverty makes people more vulnerable and induces them to leave their home community due to a lack of an alternative livelihood. Second, the increasing division between rich and poor is not only visible between countries but within countries, too. Those who have the means, can employ the poor without providing proper care through contractual obligations. Third, women's participation in the labour market has increased everywhere since the 1950s. As in capitalism, women are now brought in as a flexible workforce. Those women who can afford it will therefore increasingly hire help with domestic tasks. Domestic migrant workers undertake labour-related tasks in the household and also work in home-based child care. Fourth, the increase in immigration due to increased opportunities for travel and communication bring women who see an opportunity to earn money abroad to send back to their families at home. Gender and racial discrimination in the labour markets will force them into domestic work, even if they have been educated for different careers.

### **The Link Between Capitalism and Modern-Day Slavery**

In the 21st century, the term "slavery" might evoke images of a bygone era, but the reality is that modern-day slavery continues to persist in various forms, and capitalism has been implicated in perpetuating this injustice. While capitalism has undoubtedly led to unprecedented economic growth and innovation, it also has a dark side, contributing to the exploitation of vulnerable populations and perpetuating systems of forced labour and human trafficking. Here is the complex relationship between capitalism and modern-day, exploring how economic systems, corporate practices, and global supply chains intersect to perpetuate this pervasive issue.

### **Exploitative Labour Practices**

One of the key ways in which capitalism contributes to modern-day slavery is through

exploitative labour practices. In pursuit of profit maximization, corporations often seek to minimize production costs, leading to the exploitation of workers in developing countries. Many of these workers, particularly in industries such as textiles, agriculture, and manufacturing, are subjected to abysmal working conditions, meagre wages, and forced labour. The relentless drive for cost efficiency and competitiveness in the global market fuels a race to the bottom, where workers are often the casualties of a profit-driven system (Manzo, 2005).

### **Global Supply Chains**

The intricate web of global supply chains, which characterizes the modern capitalist economy, also plays a pivotal role in perpetuating modern-day slavery. As companies outsource production to countries with lax labour regulations and weak enforcement mechanisms, they often turn a blind eye to the labour conditions of workers in their supply chains. This lack of accountability and transparency allows for the proliferation of forced labour and human trafficking, as subcontractors and intermediaries exploit vulnerable populations with impunity. The distant and convoluted nature of supply chains makes it challenging for consumers and regulators to trace the origins of products, further obscuring the exploitation embedded within them.

### **Economic Disparities and Vulnerability**

Moreover, capitalism's tendency to exacerbate economic disparities contributes to the vulnerability of marginalized communities, increasing their susceptibility to modern-day slavery. As wealth becomes concentrated in the hands of a few, those at the bottom of the economic hierarchy are left with limited options for livelihoods, making them easy targets for traffickers and exploitative employers. Lack of access to education, healthcare, and social protections further compounds the vulnerability of these populations, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation that is perpetuated by the capitalist system (Sven & Rockman, 2016).

While capitalism has undoubtedly driven unprecedented economic growth and progress, it is crucial to acknowledge its complicity in perpetuating modern-day slavery. The pursuit of profit at any cost, the complexities of global supply chains, and the widening economic disparities all intersect to create an environment where exploitation thrives. Addressing modern-day slavery requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses ethical business practices, robust labour regulations, supply chain transparency, and efforts to mitigate economic disparities.

In a capitalist system, businesses often seek to maximize profits by cutting costs, which can lead to the exploitation of workers in developing countries. This can result in low wages, poor working conditions, and even forced labour. Additionally, capitalism's emphasis on consumerism and the demand for cheap goods can drive companies to turn a blind eye to human rights abuses in their supply chains. Critics argue that these factors contribute to the prevalence of modern-day slavery in the global economy.

### **Conclusion**

All the forms of slavery discussed show that capitalism plays a role in all of the forms of contemporary slavery discussed. Some have existed for longer and are ingrained parts of a culture. Others, like trafficking, are relatively new and are more directly a result of an economic transition to global capitalism. It is important to characterize capitalism as a political project which can be influenced by policy decisions and campaigns. In other words, the future of the people suffering from slavery depends on the design of a global system that neither exacerbates poverty nor opens the door to networks of traffickers by restrictive immigration policies. "Even in areas where the demand for labour is either met or exceeded by the existing supply...employers may still be faced with rising labour costs...because overproduction and the tendency of the rate of profit to fall in the course of capitalist competition generally requires individual producers to

cut the price of labour-power” (Brass, 1999).

Capitalism influences all contemporary forms of slavery negatively, even if they existed previously in a traditional form. However, how globalization plays a role differs between forms of slavery. This implies, too, that the ways to combat contemporary forms of slavery existing in different parts of the world vary, at least to some degree. However, there are some common ways forward for all types of contemporary slavery, for example lobbying for the ratification and implementation of international law and for the introduction and implementation of national laws to punish and prevent slavery. Recently, new international law has been developed to combat new forms of slavery and the worst forms of child labour. But its enforcement is still a huge challenge and, ironically, just as with codes of conduct, new standard-setting can work out as a form of protectionism by the US and Europe (Oliver, 2015). Campaigns to raise awareness in the affected countries, as well as in the countries that profit from the cheap labour of slaves, are also useful in all types of contemporary slavery, as are campaigns to provide alternative livelihoods for slaves and ex-slaves (and also for slaveholders in cases where their original livelihood 'forces' them to 'employ' slave labour). In all cases of contemporary slavery, provisions need to be established for ex-slaves to overcome the trauma of slavery and to be educated and reintegrated into society based on equality. Finally, all current slaves and future potential slaves would benefit from lobbying for global taxation such as the Tobin tax, increased funding of development projects, growing networks of Fair Trade and exposing the poverty-increasing effects of capitalism and its existence as a political project, not a law of nature.

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