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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Forced Labour And Decent Work Deficit In Nigeria: X-Raying International Labour
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Abstract

This paper examined the incidence of forced labour in Nigeria and its implications for decent work by x-raying established international labour conventions and protocols that set labour standards. It sought to assess the forms and prevalence of forced labor in Nigeria, identify areas of policy deviations from established ILO conventions and protocol, and identify ways forced labour contributes to decent work deficit in Nigeria. The paper adopted the desk review approach, which relied on secondary data on forced labour from the official reports of the National Bureau of Statistics, the International Labour Organization, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, the International Organization for Migration, and the World Bank. The secondary data (purely descriptive) from the official records of these institution were presented, analyzed, and used as the basis for explaining the phenomenon of forced labour. Key findings showed that Approximately 875,500 individuals are subjected to forced labour in Nigeria; women and children are disproportionately affected by forced labour, with children constituting about 40% of the victims; the North-East region experiences higher rates of forced labour; poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are major drivers of forced labour; and enforcement of anti-forced labour laws faces significant challenges, including inadequate resources, corruption, and lack of training for law enforcement personnel. Based on these key findings, it was recommended that a multifaceted approach (such as strengthening enforcement, economic empowerment, support for victims, public awareness, strengthening civil society organization, international collaboration, policy reforms, and combating corruption) should be adopted to address forced labor and decent work deficits in Nigeria effectively.

Keywords: forced labour, decent work deficit, ILO's conventions, ILO's protocols, Nigeria

Introduction

Forced labour and decent work deficit are global labour market phenomena that negatively affect human rights and economic development. Both forced labour and decent work deficit are features of the global supply chain that cuts across the agricultural, manufacturing, distribution, and service sectors. International Labour Organization and Walk Free Foundation (2017) put global estimates of forced labour among adults and children at 25 million. International Labour Organization Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines forced labour as "all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily." Here, people are forced to labor against their will and without their free will or informed permission through threats or acts of violence. Often, this happens in stack violation of the provisions of international labor standards and domesticated labour laws and policies that guide the contracts of employment. It manifests in various ways, such as child labour, human trafficking, modern slavery, and other forms of compulsory labour. Globally, certain socio-economic pressures render both adults and children vulnerable to forced labour and also mutually reinforce it. These socio-economic pressures include multi-dimensional poverty, informality, discrimination, precarious migration, abusive and fraudulent recruitment practices, debt, and manipulations (International Labour Organization, Organisation for

Economic Co-operation and Development, International Organization for Migration & United Nations Children's Fund, 2019).

Being a global issue, Nigeria has a fair share of forced labour arising from many socio-economic conditions, such as a high rate of unemployment and underemployment, poverty, insecurity, and weak regulatory frameworks. According to the International Labour Organization and National Bureau of Statistics estimates, 617,503 people were in forced labour in Nigeria's in 2022. The agricultural sector has more incidence of forced labour in Nigeria (41.1%) when compared with other sectors such as the service sector (32.8%), manufacturing (17.15%), and construction (4.77%) (International Labour Organization and National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). The foregoing statistics show that Nigeria has evidence of forced labour in almost every sector of her economy even though Nigeria has ratified the Labour Force Convention 1930 (No. 29) and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention 1957 (No. 105). The growing informalization of the Nigerian economy exacerbates the situation due to the high level of exploitation and unfair labour practices that are part of the Nigerian informal sector. Most workers in the Nigerian informal sector do not enjoy any form of social protection and are often subjected to precarious working conditions. The majority of urban workers in the informal sector are impoverished, lack access to social protection and basic health and welfare services, and work in hazardous and unhygienic conditions. One of the typical unfair labor practices in Nigeria's informal sector is the non-implementation of labour legislation such as the Employees' Act of 2010 and the Pension Reform Act of 2014. Most employers in the informal sector do not execute most of the terms of these Acts, such as the contributory pension plan and group insurance, and its enforcement is relatively weak. Furthermore, because unions cannot effectively organize workers in this industry, they cannot engage in meaningful bargaining to improve their working conditions (Ikeije, Akomolafe & Onuba, 2016).

The working conditions of most workers in the informal sector and some workers in the formal sector in Nigeria, who operate under forced labor status, always fall below the international labor organization's threshold of decent work due to their precarious nature, lack of social protection, lack of social dialogue and right at work. International Labour Organization (ILO) defines decent work as "productive work for women and men in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity." This means that work is decent with adequate pay, stability and security, standard employment, safety, normal working hours, equal opportunity, equal treatment, social protection, and social dialogue. When work lacks these indicators of decent work, it is regarded as a deficit. Thus, many work that lack these indicators of decent work as encapsulated in various ILO Conventions and Protocols are prevalent in Nigeria.

Although Nigerian government has made efforts to tackle forced labour by ratifying the conventions on forced labour and the worst form of child labour and protocol to prevent, suppress, and punish trafficking in persons and domesticating these pieces of legislation to improve the working lives of citizens, however, serious gaps still exist in the implementations of these conventions and protocols. Many workers in Nigeria are still not under the coverage of any social protection scheme or government program, especially those operating in the unregulated economy. The absence of social dialogue in some sectors (especially the informal sector) has

denied workers their voice in contributing to the terms and conditions of their employment. Many workers in the unorganized sector are unaware of their rights, and labor rules are not consistently enforced (Okafor, 2010). The despotic disposition of the government of the day and some employers pose a serious obstacle by stifling employees' voices in Nigeria and subjecting many to forced labour. The issues of forced labour and decent work deficit are quite under-reported, given the glaring level of exploitation and poverty of the working class in Nigeria.

Ikeije and Anwarul Islam (2020) observed that Nigeria's labor market has experienced an increase in employment generation in the last two decades, especially in the informal sector. However, these jobs are mostly low-wage jobs incapable of guaranteeing a decent living. It is quite instructive that forced labor, with its attendant decent work deficit, constitutes a large junk of these low-wage jobs. Notwithstanding the growing ugly incidence of forced labor in the Nigerian labour market, existing interventions have failed to address the issue effectively. Therefore, this prompts the need for proper examination of the issue to understand its nature and prevalence by analyzing the problem through the lens of ILO's established conventions and protocols, which Nigeria is a signatory to and has equally ratified. It aims to achieve this by addressing the following objectives: assess the forms and prevalence of forced labour in Nigeria with a particular focus on the informal sector; identify areas of policy deviations from established ILO conventions and protocol; identify the key drivers of forced labour and decent work deficit in Nigeria; Evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and interventions aimed at combating forced labour and promoting decent work and providing recommendations for improving the enforcement of labour policies and enhancing the protection of workers' right. Achieving these objectives is quite instructive as the study contributes to the broader goal of achieving decent work for all, a key component of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal, which aims to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015)

Conceptual Review

The concepts of forced labour and decent work are central to discussions about labour rights and international standards. The International Labour Organization (ILO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, has developed conventions and protocols to address these issues.

Forced Labour

Forced labour, as defined by the ILO, refers to work performed involuntarily under the threat of penalty. According to ILO Convention No. 29 (Forced Labour Convention, 1930), forced or compulsory labour includes all work or service exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the person has not offered himself voluntarily. This definition encompasses a wide range of practices, including slavery, trafficking, and debt bondage.

Historically, forced labour has been a persistent issue globally, and its forms have evolved. In colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, forced labour was prevalent in various forms, including during the British colonial era, when it was used extensively in agricultural and infrastructural development. Despite legal advancements, the legacy of these practices continues to influence contemporary labour issues in Nigeria.

In modern Nigeria, forced labor manifests in several forms, including child labor, human trafficking, and practices akin to slavery. According to the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report (2023), Nigeria remains a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking. The Nigerian government has implemented several measures to combat forced labour, yet enforcement and monitoring challenges persist.

Decent Work

The concept of "decent work" was articulated by the ILO in 1999 and is enshrined in the ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. Decent work encompasses opportunities for everyone to obtain productive work that is adequately rewarded and ensures a fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection for families. It also implies respect for labour rights and the inclusion of workers in decision-making processes.

Components of Decent Work

- Opportunities for Work: Decent work requires that individuals have access to employment opportunities that offer fair wages and working conditions. Unemployment and underemployment are significant issues in Nigeria, impacting the quality and stability of work available to its population.

- Rights at Work: This includes the right to safe and healthy working conditions, freedom from discrimination, and respect for workers' fundamental rights, including freedom of association and collective bargaining.

- Social Protection: Workers should have access to social protection systems that provide security in times of illness, injury, or unemployment. In Nigeria, the formal social protection system is underdeveloped, which affects workers' security and access to benefits.

- Social Dialogue: Decent work involves active participation in decision-making through social dialogue between employers, workers, and governments. This component is crucial for ensuring that the needs and concerns of all stakeholders are addressed.

International Labour Standards (ILO Conventions and Protocols)

The ILO's approach to combating forced labour and promoting decent work is formalized through its conventions and protocols. Key instruments include:

- ILO Convention No. 29 (1930): This convention sets the international standard for prohibiting forced or compulsory labour. It mandates that member states take effective measures to prevent and eliminate forced labour and provides guidelines for treating individuals subjected to such practices.

- ILO Convention No. 105 (1957): This convention complements Convention No. 29 by specifically addressing the abolition of forced labour in all its forms. It emphasizes that forced labour should not be used as a means of political coercion or economic development.

- ILO Convention No. 87 (1948) and Convention No. 98 (1949): These conventions focus on the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. They are fundamental for promoting decent work by ensuring workers can organize and negotiate collectively with employers.

- ILO Recommendation No. 190 (2000): This recommendation provides guidelines on eliminating the worst forms of child labour and complements the ILO's efforts to address forced labour and decent work.

ILO Conventions on Decent Work

In 1998, the ILO reaffirmed its core values with the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, focusing on four key principles: freedom of association, elimination of forced labor, abolition of child labor, and elimination of employment discrimination. These were framed as human rights, broadening the ILO's concept of work beyond traditional employment (Deranty & MacMillan, 2012).

Juan Somavia's 1999 Decent Work initiative integrated these principles with four strategic objectives: promoting rights at work, generating decent employment opportunities, ensuring social protection, and fostering social dialogue. Somavia acknowledged the need to address workers' rights in the informal economy and those in non-traditional work arrangements. This initiative builds on the ILO's commitment to improving the terms and conditions of employment relationships by integrating the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work with the ILO's four strategic objectives:

- Promoting rights at work: Ensuring workers' rights are respected and upheld.
- Generation of employment opportunities: Creating jobs and promoting full employment through macroeconomic policies.
- Social protection: Providing adequate social security and protection to workers.
- Social dialogue: Fostering effective communication between employers, workers, and governments.

Over time, the ILO's understanding of decent work has remained consistent with the original 1999 formulation. Decent work involves having a job that respects the dignity of work, promotes self-worth, and contributes to family stability. Realizing decent work requires creating a sufficient quantity of quality jobs through economic growth, ensuring safety, reasonable hours, collective representation, and wages above the poverty line (Reynaud, 2018).

The ILO's standards have regulated labor markets to ensure that labor is not treated merely as a commodity. This approach has evolved to address new challenges in the global economy, such as the informal sector, which often needs more regulatory oversight. The Decent Work initiative recognizes the need to extend protections and opportunities to all workers, including those in informal, self-employed, and community sectors. Despite progress, the ILO's traditional focus on wage employment has been criticized for excluding voluntary and caring activities. The ILO's understanding of decent work generally focuses on work hours, occupational health and safety, and minimum wages. However, the ILO can build on its existing frameworks by incorporating the positive dimensions of work, such as creativity, engagement, social inclusion, and personal fulfilment. By doing so, the ILO can create a more holistic and equitable labor market that recognizes and values individuals' diverse contributions to society.

While the ILO has made significant strides in improving labour standards and promoting decent work, there is a growing recognition of the need to expand the understanding of work beyond traditional employment and adapt to the changing world of work with the current trend in the gig economy, remote work along with the increasing prevalence of informal and unregulated work environments highlight the limitations of a narrow focus on employment. By embracing a broader understanding of work and addressing the needs of all workers, the ILO can ensure that its mission of social justice and lasting peace remains relevant and effective in the 21st century.

Evaluating Nigeria's Compliance with ILO Conventions and Protocols

Nigeria's Compliance with ILO Conventions
Forced Labour: Implementation of Convention No. 29 and No. 105
Nigeria ratified ILO Convention No. 29 in 1960 and Convention No. 105 in 1961. These conventions require Nigeria to implement measures to prevent and eliminate forced labour (U.S. Department of State, 2023). The Nigerian Labour Act and the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (TIPPEAA) are primary legislative frameworks aimed at addressing forced labour (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003; 2015). However, despite these legal frameworks, forced labour remains a significant issue. Reports indicate that child labour, trafficking, and bonded labour are prevalent (U.S. Department of State, 2023). The challenges include inadequate enforcement mechanisms, lack of resources, and widespread corruption within law enforcement agencies (Akinbami, 2022). The ILO's Committee of Experts has highlighted these gaps in its reports, pointing out the need for stronger enforcement and comprehensive strategies (ILO, 2023).

Decent Work: Implementation of Convention No. 87 and No. 98
Nigeria ratified ILO Convention No. 87 in 1960 and Convention No. 98 in 1961. These conventions are crucial for promoting decent work by ensuring freedom of association and collective bargaining (ILO, 1948; 1949). The Nigerian Constitution and Labour Act support these rights, providing a legal basis for workers to form unions and engage in collective bargaining (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999; 2004). However, practical implementation has faced challenges. Reports from the ILO and other monitoring bodies indicate that while legal frameworks exist, there are frequent violations of workers' rights. These include interference with union activities, limitations on collective bargaining, and inadequate protection for workers in informal sectors (Omorogbe, 2021). The Nigerian government has been criticized for insufficient support to labour unions and weak enforcement of labour laws (Ezeani, 2020).

Recommendation No. 190 on Worst Forms of Child Labour
Nigeria ratified ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2000, which aligns with Recommendation No. 190. The Child Rights Act of 2003 and other legislative measures aim to protect children from exploitation and hazardous work (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003). Despite these laws, child labour remains a serious issue in Nigeria, particularly in agriculture, domestic work, and street vending (UNICEF, 2021). Factors contributing to this problem include poverty, lack of educational opportunities, and inadequate enforcement of child protection laws (Adeniran & Ojo, 2022). Addressing child labor requires a more integrated

approach involving education, social protection, and community engagement (Nwosu & Okechukwu, 2021).

Evaluation of Compliance: Legislative Framework and Enforcement
Nigeria has made substantial progress in establishing a legal framework that aligns with ILO standards. The Labour Act, the TIPPEAA, and the Child Rights Act reflect the country's commitment to addressing forced labour and promoting decent work (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2003; 2015). However, the effectiveness of these laws is often undermined by enforcement challenges. Enforcement agencies in Nigeria face numerous obstacles, including inadequate funding, insufficient training, and corruption (Akinbami, 2022). The Nigerian government has been criticized for not fully implementing its legal obligations, as highlighted by the ILO's Committee of Experts (ILO, 2023). Strengthening institutional capacities and improving oversight mechanisms are critical for ensuring compliance with ILO conventions.
Economic instability, high levels of poverty, and limited access to education exacerbate issues related to forced labour and decent work in Nigeria. Economic pressures often force individuals into exploitative situations, and the informal sector, where many workers lack protection, is particularly vulnerable (Ogunleye & Ilesanmi, 2021).

Addressing these underlying economic and social issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes economic development, social protection programs, and educational initiatives (Adeyemi & Akinlabi, 2020). Integrating efforts to combat forced labour with broader economic policies can help create a more supportive environment for decent work. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and international bodies are crucial in monitoring and advocating for labour rights in Nigeria. CSOs provide essential support in raising awareness, offering legal assistance, and holding the government accountable (Ogbodo, 2022). International cooperation, including technical assistance from the ILO and partnerships with NGOs, can enhance efforts to address forced labour and promote decent work (ILO, 2023).

Evaluating Nigeria's compliance with ILO conventions and protocols reveals progress and challenges. While Nigeria has established a legal framework aligned with international standards, effective implementation is hampered by enforcement issues, socio-economic factors, and inadequate support for workers' rights. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including strengthening enforcement mechanisms, addressing socio-economic determinants, and fostering social dialogue. By aligning national policies with ILO standards and leveraging international cooperation, Nigeria can make significant strides in addressing forced labour and promoting decent work.

Theoretical Framework
The Relevant theory on forced labor and decent work applied to this study is the human rights-based approach (HRBA). Human rights are normative standards that address the treatment of individuals and groups towards one another and the expected treatment of governments and non-government actors towards people. Norms and guidelines incorporated into national and international legal systems help to protect individuals and groups against actions interfering with fundamental freedoms and human dignity (Gabel, 2024a). Consequently, a rights-based approach should integrate norms, principles, standards, and goals of the international human rights system into the plans and processes of development (Boesen & Martin, 2007).

Definitions of human rights evolved and varied across cultures. One resounding understanding focuses on ensuring that all human rights are respected, protected, and fulfilled, placing human dignity at its core by affirming the equal and inherent value of all individuals, regardless of gender, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity, health, religion, socio-economic status, political affiliations, or any other socially constructed classification (Gabel, 2024b). When nations ratify human rights treaties or conventions, they commit to upholding international laws that guarantee the rights of the people (Gabel, 2024a). For instance, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) outlines principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and legal redress (UNEP, 2015).

Thus, the HRBA approach aims to strengthen duty-bearers capacity to fulfill their obligations and ensure rights are realized through principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation, and accountability (UNDP, 2015). Equally, the United Nations conceptualizes basic human rights principles, emphasizing universality, equality and non-discrimination, indivisibility and interdependence, and inalienability. These principles assert that all humans are entitled to the same interdependent rights, which cannot be granted or denied arbitrarily (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

Forced labour affects over 24.9 million people worldwide, impacting human rights and economic development (ILO, 2017). In Nigeria, forced labour is prevalent in sectors like agriculture, mining, and domestic work, often manifesting through human trafficking and debt bondage. These workers face harsh conditions, long hours, and insufficient pay. Decent work deficits include a lack of job security, inadequate wages, poor working conditions, and limited social protection, exacerbated by poverty, unemployment, weak enforcement of labour laws, and socio-economic inequalities. Vulnerable groups such as women, children, and migrants are at higher risk, especially in Nigeria's informal sector, which often lacks regulatory oversight (Okojie, 2003). A human rights approach ensures that individuals have the right to work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, and dignity. HRBA supports:

1. Strengthening Legal Frameworks: Aligning national labour laws with international standards, including the ILO conventions on forced labour (ILO Conventions No. 29 and No. 105) and decent work (ILO Convention No. 122). Enhancing the capacity of labour inspection and enforcement agencies to detect and penalize violations (ILO, 2014) effectively.

2. Empowering Workers: Promoting awareness among workers about their rights and the available avenues for redress in cases of abuse or exploitation and encouraging the formation of and support for trade unions and other worker associations to enhance collective bargaining power (Okojie, 2018).

3. Addressing Economic Vulnerabilities: Implementing policies that promote job creation, particularly in sectors with high incidences of forced labour and poor working conditions—expanding social protection measures to provide safety nets for vulnerable workers, including healthcare, unemployment benefits, and retirement pensions (World Bank, 2019).

4. International Cooperation: Collaborating with international organizations and other countries to tackle human trafficking and forced labour networks that operate across borders. Seeking technical assistance and funding from international bodies to support the implementation of labour rights initiatives (United Nations, 2015).

Addressing forced labour and decent work deficits is crucial for promoting human dignity, economic development, and social justice. Ensuring that all workers in Nigeria have access to decent work is essential for reducing poverty, enhancing productivity, and fostering inclusive growth. Moreover, tackling forced labor is a moral imperative that aligns with Nigeria's commitments to international human rights and labor standards.

Empirical review

Several studies have documented the prevalence and forms of forced labour in Nigeria. For instance, Akinwale (2009) comprehensively examines forced labour practices in Nigeria, identifying key sectors such as agriculture, mining, and domestic work where forced labour is most prevalent. Akinwale's study highlights how economic hardship, cultural practices, and weak enforcement of labor laws contribute to the persistence of forced labor in these sectors.

Similarly, the work of Okojie (2012) examines human trafficking as a critical driver of forced labour in Nigeria. Okojie identifies that trafficked individuals, especially women and children, are often coerced into various forms of forced labor, including prostitution, domestic servitude, and street begging. The study underscores the role of poverty, unemployment, and lack of education in perpetuating trafficking and forced labour.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has also extensively researched forced labour in Nigeria. In a report (2017), the organization details the systemic issues contributing to forced labour, including inadequate legal frameworks, corruption, and ineffective law enforcement. The report emphasizes the need for comprehensive policy interventions and enhanced international cooperation to combat forced labour.

Adesina (2011) explores the concept of decent work within the Nigerian context, identifying key deficits such as job insecurity, low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of social protection. Adesina argues that these deficits are exacerbated by structural issues in the Nigerian economy, including high levels of informal employment, weak labour institutions, and limited access to education and skills training.

In a study by Fapohunda (2012), the author examines the informal sector, which employs a significant portion of Nigeria's workforce. The study finds that workers in the informal sector face considerable decent work deficits, including lack of legal protection, poor working conditions, and absence of social security. Fapohunda calls for policies integrating informal sector workers into the formal economy and providing them with necessary protections and benefits.

Furthermore, the World Bank (2019) provides a detailed analysis of Nigeria's employment and labor market dynamics, highlighting the challenges in achieving decent work. The report points

out that despite economic growth, job creation has been insufficient, and many of the jobs that are created are of poor quality. The World Bank emphasizes the need for comprehensive labour market reforms and investments in education and skills development to improve job quality and promote decent work.

Adebola and Ogundele (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study examining the socio-economic impact of forced labour on Nigerian households, particularly in rural areas. The study combined household surveys with in-depth interviews, revealing that forced labour significantly reduces household income and educational attainment among children. The economic pressure on families often perpetuates a cycle of poverty, forcing children into labour to support their families. The study underscores the need for economic empowerment programs and social safety nets to break this cycle of poverty and forced labour.

Aluko and Bello (2023) investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on forced labour in Nigeria. The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative insights from interviews. The findings indicate that the pandemic exacerbated forced labour conditions due to economic hardship, increased unemployment, and disrupted social services. The study calls for post-pandemic recovery policies addressing these vulnerabilities and supporting affected populations.

Eze and Ukwu (2022) examined the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in combating forced labour in Nigeria. The study utilized qualitative methods, including interviews with representatives from various CSOs and analysis of case studies. The findings highlight the critical role CSOs play in raising awareness, providing support to victims, and advocating for policy changes. However, the study also notes the challenges CSOs face, such as limited funding and political interference.

Ibrahim and Hassan (2021) focused on the determinants of child labour in Nigeria's North-East region, an area severely affected by insurgency and displacement. Using a quantitative approach, the study analyzed data from household surveys to identify key factors contributing to child labour. The findings indicate that poverty, lack of education, and displacement are the primary drivers of child labour. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to address these root causes and protect children from exploitation.

Adebola and Ogundele (2020) examined the socio-economic impact of forced labour on households in rural Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, the authors conducted household surveys and in-depth interviews. The study found that forced labour significantly reduces children's household income and educational attainment. The economic pressure on families often leads to a cycle of poverty, compelling children into labour to support their families. The study highlights the urgent need for economic empowerment programs and social safety nets to break this cycle.

Mohammed & Okon (2021) evaluated Nigeria's implementation of ILO Conventions Nos. 29 and 105 on forced labour. The authors used a policy analysis framework, reviewed national laws and policies, and interviewed government officials and representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The study found significant gaps in enforcing these conventions,

including inadequate resources, corruption, and lack of training for enforcement personnel. The study calls for enhanced capacity building and international cooperation to improve compliance with ILO standards.

Nwachukwu and Ibrahim's (2022) longitudinal study investigated the relationship between child labour and school attendance in Nigeria. The authors tracked a cohort of children over three years, collecting data on their labour activities and school attendance. The study found a strong negative correlation between child labour and school attendance, with children engaged in labour being less likely to attend school regularly. The study emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to reduce child labour and improve educational outcomes.

Chukwu and Adebayo's (2023) empirical study analyzed the economic drivers of forced labour in Nigeria. The authors used econometric modeling to assess the impact of various economic factors, such as poverty, unemployment, and income inequality, on the prevalence of forced labour. The study found that poverty and unemployment are the primary drivers of forced labour, with income inequality exacerbating the problem. The study suggests that policies aimed at poverty reduction and job creation are essential for combating forced labour.

Okafor and Williams (2023) explored the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in combating forced labour in Nigeria. Using a qualitative approach, the authors conducted interviews with representatives from various CSOs and analyzed case studies of successful interventions. The study found that CSOs play a crucial role in raising awareness, providing support to victims, and advocating for policy changes. However, the effectiveness of these organizations is often limited by lack of funding and political support.

Oladipo and Adeyemi (2021) evaluated Nigeria's compliance with ILO conventions on forced labour, particularly Conventions Nos. 29 and 105. The study used a legal analysis framework to assess the alignment of Nigerian labour laws with ILO standards. Despite ratifying key conventions, the study found significant gaps in implementation and enforcement, primarily due to inadequate resources, corruption, and lack of political will. The authors call for stronger legislative measures and improved enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with international labour standards.

Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative approach to analyze forced labour and decent work deficits in Nigeria comprehensively. This involves collecting and analyzing numerical data related to forced labour prevalence, sectoral distribution, and economic impact from various sources such as national surveys, government reports, and international organizations. Data Analysis Techniques involve descriptive statistics.

The study utilizes a variety of data sources to ensure a robust and comprehensive analysis:
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS 2023): Provides quantitative data on labour force statistics, including the prevalence of forced labour across different sectors.
- National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP): Offers data on enforcement and prosecution of forced labour cases.

- International Labour Organization (ILO, 2022): Supplies global estimates and reports on forced labour and decent work conditions.

Statistical Data and Analysis on Forced Labour in Nigeria (Economic Growth and Sectoral Contributions)
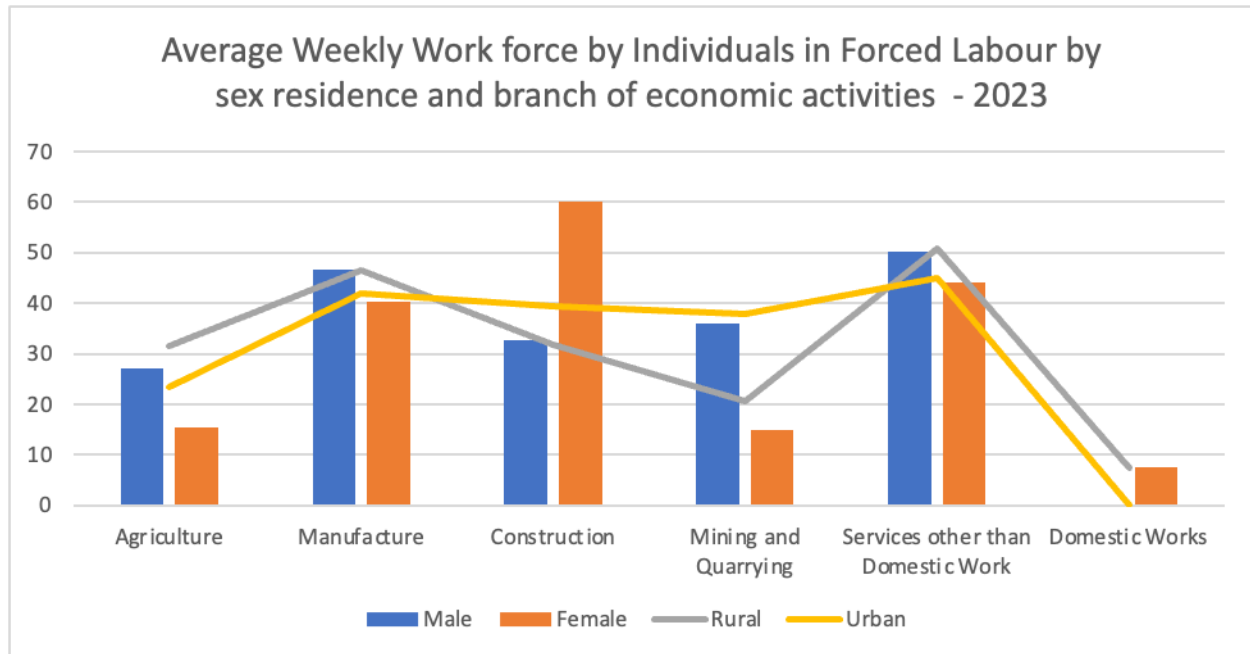
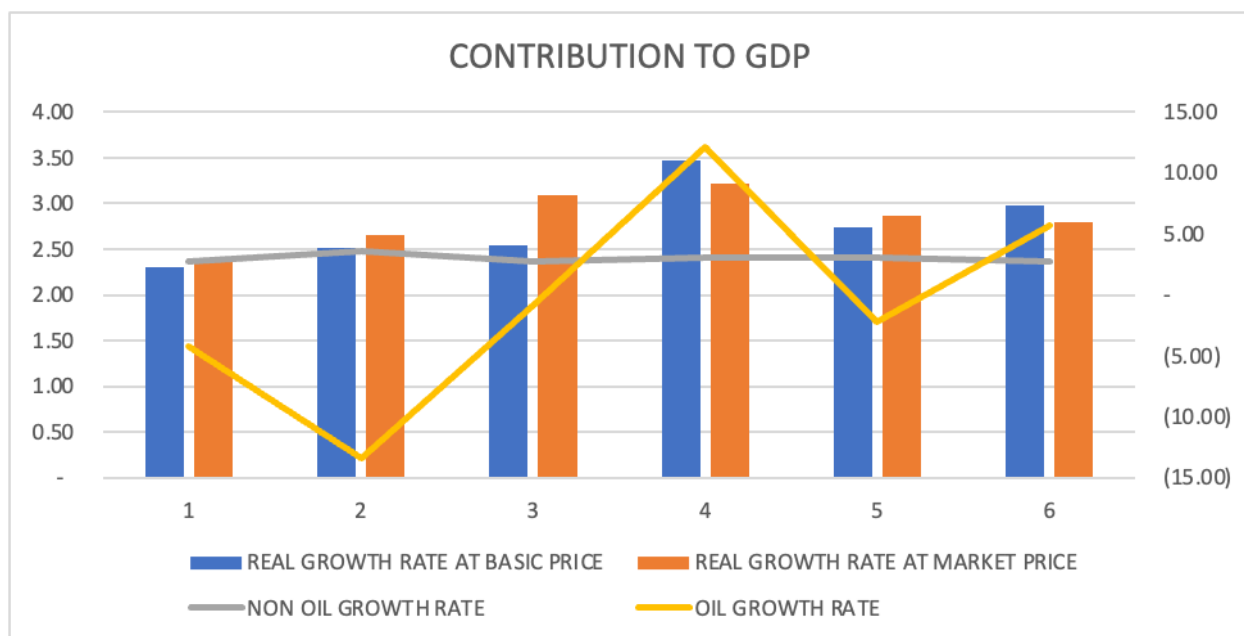*Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2023)*

The data presents quarterly growth rates across agriculture, industries, and services. The data shows fluctuations in growth rates, indicating varying economic stability:
- Agriculture: Growth rates ranged from -0.89% to 2.10% across quarters.
- Industries: Growth rates ranged from -1.94% to 3.86%, showing significant variability.
- Services: This sector demonstrated more stability with growth rates consistently around 4% (NBS 2023)

The data suggests that forced labour is prevalent across multiple sectors, with significant gender and rural-urban disparities. Sectors like agriculture and construction show high levels of forced labour, indicating the need for targeted interventions.

Gender Disparities: The higher incidence of forced labour among females in construction and domestic work highlights gender-specific vulnerabilities. Addressing these disparities requires gender-sensitive policies and enforcement mechanisms.

Impact on Forced Labour: Economic instability, especially in agriculture and industries, can exacerbate forced labour. Due to a lack of stable employment, individuals may resort to exploitative work conditions. Economic downturns often lead to increased vulnerability among workers, pushing them into forced labour to sustain their livelihoods.

CONTRIBUTION TO GDP

Source: National Bureau of Statistics (2023)

The real growth rates at both basic and market prices indicate overall economic trends:
- Basic Price Growth Rate: Ranged from 2.30% to 3.46%.
- Market Price Growth Rate: Ranged from 2.39% to 3.20% (NBS 2023)

Positive growth rates are essential for improving employment conditions and providing decent work. However, the modest growth rates observed may not be sufficient to significantly reduce forced labour and improve decent work standards, especially if the benefits of growth are not equitably distributed.
- Agriculture: More forced labour in rural areas (31.4%) than in urban areas (23.3%).
- Manufacturing and Services: Significant presence of forced labour, with males dominating in manufacturing (46.7%) and females in construction (60%) (NBS 2023)

Poverty: High poverty rates are a significant driver of forced labour. Many individuals are forced into exploitative work conditions due to economic desperation. Specific data from the fact sheet indicate that approximately 40% of the Nigerian population lives below the poverty line, exacerbating their vulnerability to forced labour (NBS, 2023).

Education: Lack of access to education is another critical factor. The fact sheet notes that many children are involved in child labour due to limited educational opportunities. For instance, an estimated 15 million children in Nigeria are not attending school, which increases their risk of exploitation (NBS, 2023).

The prevalence of forced labour in Nigeria is significant, affecting various demographic groups. According to the ILO (2017), approximately 875,500 individuals are trapped in forced labour situations in Nigeria. This figure includes both domestic and cross-border trafficking victims. The demographic breakdown reveals that women and children are disproportionately affected, with children constituting about 40% of forced labour victims (ILO, 2017).

Forced labour is prevalent in Nigeria across several sectors. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020) indicate that the agriculture sector has the highest incidence of forced labour, accounting for about 55% of all cases. The manufacturing sector follows with 20%, while construction, mining, and domestic work collectively account for the remaining 25% (NBS, 2020).

There are notable regional variations in the prevalence of forced labour in Nigeria. According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2018), the northern regions of Nigeria, particularly the North-East, experience higher rates of forced labour due to factors such as insurgency, poverty, and displacement. In contrast, the southern regions, particularly Lagos and Rivers States, report higher incidences of human trafficking and forced domestic work (UNODC, 2018).

The economic impact of forced labour in Nigeria is profound. A study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2019) estimates that forced labour costs the Nigerian economy approximately $13.4 billion annually in lost productivity and economic output. The study highlights that forced labour exploits individuals and undermines economic growth and development.

Enforcement of anti-forced labour laws remains a significant challenge in Nigeria. Data from the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP, 2020) show that between 2015 and 2020, only 750 convictions for forced labour and trafficking-related offenses were secured. This low conviction rate is attributed to corruption, inadequate resources, and lack of training for law enforcement personnel (NAPTIP, 2020).

Public awareness and reporting of forced labour cases are critical for effective intervention. A survey conducted by the ILO (2019) found that only 35% of Nigerians know the laws and mechanisms to report forced labour incidents. The survey highlights the need for increased public awareness campaigns and community engagement to encourage reporting and support for victims (ILO, 2019).

Discussions
As of the latest estimates, there are 24.9 million victims of forced labour worldwide. This figure includes 16 million people exploited in the private sector, such as domestic work, construction, and agriculture. Additionally, 4.8 million persons are in forced sexual exploitation, and 4.1 million in forced labour imposed by state authorities. Forced labour in the private economy generates $150 billion in illegal profits annually. Of this amount, $99 billion comes from commercial sexual exploitation, while $51 billion results from forced economic exploitation in agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and domestic work. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, accounting for 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry and 58% in other sectors. Migrant workers and Indigenous people are particularly vulnerable to forced labor due to factors like poverty, lack of education, and discriminatory practices—Asia and the Pacific account for the highest number of forced labour victims at 16.5 million. Africa has 5.7 million victims, followed by Europe and Central Asia with 3.6 million and the Americas with 2.2 million. Forced labour manifests in various forms, including debt bondage, human trafficking, and slavery-like practices.

In 2022, approximately 617,503 individuals in Nigeria were identified as being in forced labor, which is equivalent to 5.2 per 1,000 people. The agricultural sector employs the highest percentage of individuals in forced labor, followed by services and construction. Men are more likely to be victims of forced labor

(7.8 per 1,000) compared to women (2.7 per 1,000). Education levels influence the risk of forced labor; individuals with primary education are most vulnerable due to a lack of protective skills. Married adults exhibit a slightly higher prevalence of forced labor than unmarried individuals. Circumstances leading to forced labor include a lack of freedom to terminate contracts and working under coercive conditions such as wage withholding.

The prevalence of forced labor is highest among individuals with primary education, for which 7.2 of every thousand individuals are in a situation of forced labor. Married adults are slightly more likely to be in forced labour than unmarried individuals. Among individuals in forced labor in their current job, the most common circumstance of involuntariness experienced was being made to work with no freedom or limited freedom to terminate their work contract. Debt bondage affects millions, particularly in South Asia, where individuals are forced to work to repay debts.

It is estimated that 27.6 million people are subjected to forced labour globally. This includes various forms of exploitation, such as forced domestic work, forced agricultural labor, and forced sexual exploitation. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, comprising 71% of the total number of victims. Children account for 25% of forced labour victims. The Asia-Pacific region has the highest number of forced labour cases, followed by Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Forced labour results in significant economic losses, estimated at $150 billion in illegal profits annually. This affects both local economies and global markets. Victims of forced labour come from diverse backgrounds, including migrants, ethnic minorities, and impoverished individuals. False promises of decent work and better living conditions often lure them. Poverty, lack of education, and absence of legal protection are significant factors that increase the vulnerability of individuals to forced labour.

The data from the NBS (2023) report reveals that approximately 875,500 individuals are in forced labour in Nigeria, with significant sectoral and regional variations. The agriculture sector has the highest incidence, accounting for 55% of forced labour cases, followed by manufacturing (20%), construction, mining, and domestic work (25%). The demographic data indicate that women and children are disproportionately affected by forced labour. Children constitute about 40% of the forced labour victims, highlighting a critical area of concern for child protection policies.

The UNODC (2018) report highlights that the North-East region of Nigeria experiences higher rates of forced labour due to factors such as insurgency and displacement. In contrast, the southern regions, particularly Lagos and Rivers States, report higher incidences of human trafficking and forced domestic work. The IOM (2019) estimates that forced labour costs the Nigerian economy approximately $13.4 billion annually in lost productivity and economic output. This economic burden underscores the need for effective interventions to combat forced labour and enhance economic growth.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings
- Prevalence of Forced Labour: Approximately 875,500 individuals are subjected to forced labour in Nigeria, with significant variations across different sectors and regions. Agriculture accounts for the highest incidence of forced labour, followed by manufacturing, construction, mining, and domestic work.
- Demographic Distribution: Women and children are disproportionately affected by forced labour, with children constituting about 40% of the victims. This highlights a pressing need for child protection policies.

- Regional Variations: The North-East region experiences higher rates of forced labour due to factors such as insurgency and displacement, while the southern regions report higher incidences of human trafficking and forced domestic work.
- Economic Impact: Forced labour imposes a substantial economic burden on Nigeria, costing approximately $13.4 billion annually in lost productivity and economic output.
- Challenges in Enforcement: Enforcing anti-forced labour laws faces significant challenges, including inadequate resources, corruption, and a lack of training for law enforcement personnel.
- Policy and Legislative Gaps: Despite ratifying key ILO conventions and having national laws like TIPPEAA and the Labour Act, there are considerable gaps in implementation and enforcement.
- Socio-economic Factors: Poverty, unemployment, and lack of education are major drivers of forced labour. Many individuals, especially in rural areas, are compelled to accept exploitative working conditions due to limited livelihood options.
- Role of Civil Society and International Cooperation: Civil society organizations (CSOs) and international bodies like the ILO play crucial roles in raising awareness, supporting victims, and offering technical assistance to improve enforcement and capacity building.

Implications for Policy and Practice
The findings from this study underscore the necessity for a multifaceted approach to address forced labour and decent work deficits in Nigeria effectively. The following policy recommendations and practical steps are essential:
- Strengthening Enforcement: Increase resources and training for enforcement agencies to enhance their capacity to investigate and prosecute forced labour cases effectively. Implement robust anti-corruption measures within enforcement agencies to ensure accountability and integrity in handling forced labour cases.
- Economic Empowerment: Develop and implement policies to reduce poverty and improve access to education and vocational training. Promote economic empowerment programs that provide alternative livelihood options, reducing vulnerability to forced labour.
- Support for Victims: Enhance support services for victims of forced labour, including legal assistance, rehabilitation programs, and access to education and vocational training. Ensure that victims have the necessary resources to reintegrate into society and lead productive lives.
- Public Awareness: Increase campaigns to educate communities about forced labour laws and reporting mechanisms. Engage in community outreach programs to build trust and encourage reporting of forced labour cases.
- Strengthening Civil Society Organizations: Provide funding, resources, and a supportive legal framework to support CSOs' efforts. Encourage collaboration between CSOs and government agencies to enhance the effectiveness of interventions.
- International Collaboration: Continue collaborating with international bodies such as the ILO to receive technical assistance and align national policies with international best practices. Engage in international partnerships to share knowledge, resources, and strategies for combating forced labour.
- Policy Reforms: Review and update existing labor laws to close gaps and ensure comprehensive coverage of all forms of forced labor. Implement policy reforms that

address the root causes of forced labour, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education.

- Combating Corruption: Implementing robust anti-corruption measures within enforcement agencies to ensure accountability and integrity in handling forced labour cases.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can make significant progress in eliminating forced labour and promoting decent work. The concerted efforts of government agencies, civil society organizations, international bodies, and the community are crucial in achieving these goals. Addressing the issues of forced labour and decent work deficits improves the lives of affected individuals and contributes to Nigeria's overall economic and social development.

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