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**Child slavery and its effects on social and economic security in Africa: A case study of selected countries in West Africa**

(Abstract)

Child slavery started in Africa before the arrival of Europeans through slave trade. The practice of given child into slavery has not stopped but continues in most African countries with millions of sub-Saharan Africans being exported to North Africa, the Middle East, and the Persian Gulf. Child slavery among other problems is indeed an unsolved problem facing African child today. The practice is very alarming in most West Africa countries. This paper therefore through literature search of child slavery observed that an estimated amount of 26 million slaves in the world with more than half of that number is found in Africa. These slaves include victims of debt bondage, prostitution, human trafficking, child labour and serfdom and little seems to be done to reverse the trend. The act was found to be rooted in the traditional customs and culture of most countries like Niger with statistics showing more than 800,000 slaves in the country ( the proportion that is more than 7 percent of the country's population). The same can be said of Mauritania, Chad, Mali, Nigeria, Benin, Cameroon and Gabon. Most poverty stricken families in some West Africa countries give up children for a certain amount of money, for an agreed number of years to provide for the rest of their family. Enslaved children often face very harsh living and working conditions and are unable to lead happy lives. Some of them run away from their owners; unable to return home and unable to find alternative employment. Many of the girls resort to prostitution and the boys resort to crime. In order to preserve the future of the children and to safe the economy future social and economic crises, it is high time the affected African societies abandoned this age-long cultural practice of domestic child labour and embraced child rights unreservedly. Government and non-governmental organizations have to step in and tackle this ugly practice from its roots, ensure the freedom of every child in bondage and hunt and bring to justice, child traffickers. Let the rights of the child be upheld and his/her welfare ensured.