



Modern Slavery and Social Sustainability of Multi-national Companies' Supply Chains in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This paper from an empirical perspective examined modern slavery and social sustainability of multinational companies' supply chains in Nigeria. The target population of this research consists of contract or casual staff within manufacturing distribution and retail supply chains of thirty (30) multinational companies listed in the Nigerian Stock Exchange. However, owing to the wide-ranging nature of the multinational corporations, the study primarily focused on the contract staff of nine (9) multinational companies within Port Harcourt in the South-South Geo-political zone of Nigeria. The study employed a simple random sampling technique to draw one hundred and eighty (180) contract staff as respondents on the basis of twenty (20) per multinational company studied, and administered one hundred and eighty (180) copies of structured questionnaire on a one-on-one basis to gather quantitative data for the study. Out of 180 copies of questionnaire distributed, 145 copies accounting for 80% were retrieved for analysis. The simple regression statistical technique through the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used for analysis. The result of the simple regression analysis shows that contract slavery has a strong negative impact on social sustainability. The study therefore concludes that, modern slavery negatively impact social sustainability of contract staff of multinational companies in Nigeria, and recommends amongst others that, multinational companies in Nigeria should use certainty in their supply chain statements as a remarkably strategic form of action to expose the status quo, increase accountability and holdup action against contract slavery contained by their supply chains, thereby successfully protecting potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring social sustainability of contract staff in their firms.*

Keywords: *Contract slavery, Contemporary supply chain slavery, Multinational corporations, Social sustainability.*

INTRODUCTION

In a global knowledge-based economy, the major players constitute the multinational corporations (MNCs). The Dutch East India Company according to Mondo (2008) was reckoned as the first multinational corporation in the world and the first company to issue stock. A Multinational Corporation (MNC) is also described as multinational enterprise (MNE), transnational enterprise (TNE), transnational corporation (TNC), International

Corporation, or stateless corporation (Roy *et al.*, 1992). The international Labor Organization (ILO) has defined a MNC as a corporation that has its management headquarters in one country, recognized as the home country, and functions in several other countries, referred to as host countries. The operations outside the company's home country may be connected to the parent by merger, operated as subsidiaries, or have substantial autonomy.

A multinational company is a company or corporation in the sphere of business or manufacturing which operates in a number of countries and has employees far beyond the country of its formation considering the distinctiveness of national markets of foreign countries. This implies that, multinational corporation has business operations in at least one country other than its home country, generating at least 25% of its income outside of its home country. With clever but distinguished sanity, Multinational Corporation as a corporate group owns and controls the production of goods or services in at least one country other than its home country (Pitelis & Rogers, 2000). Control is sincerely regarded as a vital feature of a multinational corporation, to differentiate it from international portfolio investment organizations.

Accordingly, in contemporary times, multinational corporations control the setting of Nigerian economy. International business is the stimulator for multinationals and is presently heightened by the flourish of globalization. The concept of globalization has given drive to multinational corporations to maneuver more easily in other parts of globe other than their home countries. Onudugo (2013) declared that the expression 'globalization' implies amalgamation of the world economies into one in a trend fittingly labeled as "global village. The actions of multinational companies in Nigeria have been branded as debatable or even unprincipled due to the problems they have originated on the society, and especially the practice of modern slavery in contemporary supply chains.

The operation and management of supply chains has long been an imperative building block in the business and management literature (Yalcin *et al.* 2020; Liao & Widowati 2020; Pujawan 2017), however modern slavery has received merely narrow concentration in that literature. Thus, Caruana *et al.* (2020) declared that 'modern slavery research in business and management remains significantly, and disappointingly underdeveloped' and that the business and management literature failed to notice 'the nature and prevalence of modern slavery within the businesses and supply chains of various sectors. 'Modern slavery also known as modern-day slavery or contemporary slavery or neo-slavery (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2023), is a multifarious social, economic, and legal concern that impinges on all places of the world. All country is influenced by some type of slavery (ILO, Walk Free Foundation & IOM, 2022), and it is universally time-honored as a discreditable stain on society; company's' supply chain practices may be fraction of the problem.

Modern slavery, according to Such *et al.* (2018) is 'the recruitment, movement, harbouring or receiving of children, women or men through the use of force, coercion, abuse of vulnerability, deception or other means for the purpose of exploitation' Modern slavery subsists in the supply chains of approximately all industries (Walk Free Foundation 2016), and people who are victims of modern slavery are denied of their freedom and are merely paid their basic living requirements (Islam & Van Staden, 2021), in the midst of ill-treatment to changeable extent. Gold *et al.* (2015)

assert that, modern slavery is a sinister predicament in many sectors of the global economy, and is habitually perceived to pose finely tuned challenges for supply chain management.

It is interesting to note that, even though slavery is legitimately proscribed universally, the Global Slavery Index (GSI) in 2014, reckoned 35.8 million slaves within the Asian and African countries of India, China, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Indonesia, Bangladesh and Thailand, and an excess of half a million slaves contained by the European Union in this expedition, giving the utmost total number approximation of slaves globally in the history of mankind (Walk Free Foundation, 2014, GSI).

It has also been acknowledged that, the development of multinational companies has boosted the development of global supply chains as a result of economic globalization (Zheng *et al.* 2021; Chen *et al.* 2017), the widespread practice of outsourcing in supply chains has as well generated the conditions for the subsistence of modern slavery in multinational companies' global supply chains (Genevieve 2014). Modern appearances of slavery are arrayed in form of forced labour, human trafficking, and forced marriage to debt bondage and organ trafficking, inclination severally paralleled to historical or chattel slavery, since a person is regard as the private possessions of another (Mende, 2019; Allain, 2012; Bales, 2012). The key defining constituents of modern slavery practice linger, explicitly as 'control' that is coercive in nature and 'exploitation' as its rationale, and whether it entails the application of force, pressure, or the misuse of power or a situation of defenselessness (Szablewska & Kubacki, 2023). Modern slavery is a management practice (Crane, 2013), which absorbs assorted types of exploitation making modern slavery a clandestine activity.

Previously, researchers in supply chain management (SCM) have concentrated on the management of social issues in terms of health and safety, human rights, gender diversity, and minority development in supply chains (Yawar & Seuring, 2017; Mani *et al.*, 2020), however researchers in contemporary times have started to transfer their spotlights to modern slavery, a particular form of social issue in supply chains (Gold *et al.*, 2015; New, 2015). Modern slavery that metamorphosed as forced labor, human trafficking, and other categories of worker exploitation, is "illegal, often hidden, and involves a range of labor market intermediaries" (Caruana *et al.*, 2021:258) and it is analyzed as "one of the most acute abuses of human rights in contemporary business practice" (Crane, 2013:49).

Supply chain research has flourished in the preceding twenty years, and a fraction of this has been a mounting consciousness of the necessity for research to handle the broader social and ethical insinuations of business practice (Gereffi & Lee 2012). Hence, researches on modern slavery in company's supply chains have accumulated (Stevenson & Cole, 2018; Flynn & Walker, 2021; Geng *et al.*, 2022; Bott, 2018; Meehan & Pinnington, 2021, Benstead *et al.*, 2020)

The above-mentioned authors determined to contemplate their studies of modern slavery in the UK service industries' supply chains solely on modern slavery statements, with the belief that such a method was suitable in an area where there exists little, or no available work currently. This is a sad and sorry state of modern slavery research in contemporary supply chain management. Besides, the research literature concentrated on modern slavery from a supply chain standpoint is comparatively inadequate (Quarshie & Salmi, 2014). This has resulted in this

current empirical investigation into modern slavery and social sustainability in contemporary supply chains with a special reference on multinational corporations in Nigeria under the lens of transaction cost economics.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on the transaction cost economics theory.

Transaction Cost Economics Theory

Transaction cost economics (TCE) deals with the allotment of economic activities across different modes of organizations which espouses distinctive structural analysis and depicts the firm as a governance structure (Schniederjans & Hales (2016). Transaction Cost Economics (TCE) constitutes one of the most vital perceptions in organizational and management studies which has materialized as a principal prototype in literature and achieved improved interest from audience (Tsang, 2006). Transaction cost economics is an “an effort to better understand complex economic organization by selectively joining law, economics and organization theory” (Williamson, 1993). Transaction cost economics speculates that organization select the organizational structure that has the least transaction cost that guarantees that actors fulfill contractual obligations, supplies a structure for handling ambiguities and also efficiently upholds against partner opportunism (Williamson 1993).

Transaction cost economics incessantly concentrates on the inquiry of how economic competitive advantage could be realized and also how supply chain sustainability can be formed (Grover & Malhotra 2003; Williamson 2008). Accordingly, the concept of supply chain management is assembled on the theories of the firm chiefly transaction cost economies, which supposes that opportunism is intrinsic in the supply chain (Yang *et al.*, 2012), therefore supply chain actors adopts opportunism to exploit weaker actors along the supply chain ensuing a master-slave relationship, sustaining that incompetency in organizations provokes its own as competition has become more strong (Wathne & Heide, 2000).

The theory is relevant to this study because transaction cost economics aims at plummeting transaction cost, and this is mostly accountable for the reason why one business capitalizing another propagates contract slavery in contemporary supply chains. It is clear as crystal that, underdevelopment, backwardness and hopelessness persist among the contract staff due to the exploitation from their employer who must determine the economic setting in their job. The contract staff in multinational firms work through physical or mental hazard and is denied of growth and development of his human potential through modern slavery, with no respect for his social sustainability in contemporary supply chains.

The Concept of Supply Chain

The term "supply chain" is commonly pigeonhole as the configuration of firms that transport products or services to the consumer market (Lambert *et al.*, 1998). A supply chain constitutes a network sandwiched between a firm and its suppliers to produce and distribute a given product

to the ultimate end user; this network integrates a multiplicity of activities, groups, units, information and resources (Ibn Sassi, (2013).

In general, the supply chain is the process that is generated when a customer places an order until the product or service is delivered and paid for. Hence, the supply chain includes the planning, execution and control of all activities related to the flow of materials and information, the purchase of raw materials, the intermediate transformation of the product and its delivery to the final customer. It is the set of interdependent companies (considered as the different links of the chain) coordinating in the realization of activities (supplies, production and distribution) to ensure the circulation of products or services from their conception to their end of life (after-sales service and withdrawal logistics).

Saleh (2009) noted that supply chain includes a series of steps involved in obtaining a product or service for the customer. The steps embrace the transportation of raw materials and their transformation into finished products, the transportation of these products, and their distribution to the end user. The entities concerned in a supply chain enclose producers, sellers, warehouses, transportation companies, distribution centers and retailer, and they are responsible for all jobs that commence from receiving an order to convene customer demand. The depiction in Figure 1 plainly demonstrates the connections between the five stages constituting physical and information flows, outlining the supply chain network.



Figure 1: Five Key Stages or Elements important for Transforming Raw Materials into Finished Products in a Supply Chain.

Sources: Muckstadt, J. A., Murray, D. H., Rappold, J. A. & Collins, D. E., (2001). Guidelines for collaborative supply chain system design and operation. *Information Systems Frontiers*, 3(4), 427- 453.

Chopra, S. & Meindl, P., (2016). *Supply Chain Management: Strategy, Planning, And Operation*. (6th ed.) Boston: Pearson.

The Concept of Modern Slavery

As noted by Landman and Silverman (2019), ‘popular understandings of slavery often conjure up images of African slaves brought to the Caribbean, Brazil and the US, where such images typically include slave ships, slaves bound in chains and slaves auctioned at market’, however, ‘such imagery tends to obscure current realities of slavery and relegate it as a problem of the past.’

Approximately in the year 2007, the term modern slavery came into prevalent use by academics concerned with the sustained subsistence of diverse forms of extremely unfree labour (Bhoola 2007; Davidson 2015; Craig *et al.* 2019). Modern slavery recurrently crops up in business settings functioning with people possessing low skills and has heavy bias on labour (Avis 2020).

Defining slavery, and modern slavery, is a multifaceted issue. Allain and Bales (2012) affirmed that, the first recognized international definition of slavery was espoused in 1926, specifically, 'slavery is the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised' (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights 2021), however he contended that 'the very term slavery and its contours are contested.' The 1926 Slavery Convention defines slavery in international law as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised"(Bellagio-Harvard Guidelines, 2012:1).

Modern slavery is the expression used to explain a variety of exploitative practices, and there is widespread agreement on the general definition, if not on the precise precincts, of the term (Allain 2012; Crane 2013; RNLPS 2012). In the perception of supply chains, Gold *et al.* (2015) defined modern slavery, as: "the exploitation of a person who is deprived of individual liberty anywhere along the supply chain from raw material extraction to the final customer for service provision or production". Building on these definitions, this paper defines slavery in supply chains as the mistreatment of a human being who is deprived of personal liberty ubiquitously all along the supply chain, commencing from raw material extraction to the ultimate end user, for the intent of service provision or production.

Modern slavery in contemporary supply chains is prevalent crosswise the globe, with a predictable 16 million people in the global private economy kept in forced labour exploitation (Global Slavery Index 2019). Modern slavery is habitually in use to incorporate, victims of sex trafficking and domestic servitude. Landman and Silverman (2019) contended that 'slavery is animated and well and that it has materialized into new forms or modernized old forms. As supply chains are internationally linked and highly outsourced nowadays, the risk of espousing slave labour somewhere in the supply chain is in existence in approximately all industries, from electronics, state-of-the-art, automotive and steel to agriculture, seafood, mining, garment and textiles (David *et al.*, 2012).

Slavery is a crime against humanity in the eyes of international law, however, it continues as a feasible and lucrative management practice for businesses, and that 'modern slavery, far from being an abnormality, is a reasonable upshot of the way modern political economic system is prearranged and its historical foundation in the colonial system.' There are many causes of modern slavery in the supply chain, embracing poverty, racial discrimination, corruption, inadequate laws, crime, and several indiscretions in the supply chain. Conventional estimates situate the number of victims of modern slavery at over 40 million (International Labour Organization, 2022).

Modern slavery does not have a meticulous conduit or category of victim (LeBaron *et al.*, 2018). However, there are different manifestations of mistreatments in which victims of modern slavery

may be subjected to. Bales and Trodd (2013) established that, slavery primarily is branded in three contours in the contemporary times.

1. Chattel slavery, in which individuals are born, captured or traded into interminable slavery;
- 2 Debt bondage slavery, in which individuals assure themselves in conjunction with loans for an uncertain duration of time, though their labour does not diminish the debt owing to very expensive interest rates or counterfeit accounting.
- 3 Contract slavery, where bogus employment contracts beguile employees into the trafficking and enslavement sequence.

This study however, contemplates on the components of contemporary slavery linked with contract slavery contained by a supply chain as it relates to multinational corporations in Nigeria.

Contract Slavery

It is pertinent to note that there are no clear-cut accounts in terms of the source or chronological foundation of casual/contract labour spaced out from the orientation that the historical use of the terms “casual labour” was originally invented by a government enquiry into dock labour practices in Britain in 1920, where casual labour was becoming the custom for unskilled workers. It was in the clash against those states of affairs that the first great unions of unskilled workers were established, together with the British dock workers in the early 20th century (Broad, 1995).

Contract slavery appears in several occasions where casual workers are made reference to as; contract staff, contingent workers, part-time workers, dispensable workers and non-core workers (Hampton, 1988). Casual workers are portrayed as labour only sub-contractors (Buckley & Endewuik, 1989). Casual workers are also identified as flexible workforce and peripheral workers (Williams, 1993). Casual work is expressed as contract work, on call work, part-time, fixed term contract and temporary work (Francoise, 1998). The International Labour Organization ILO (2007) delineates casual employment as workers who have an explicit or implicit contract of employment which is not expected to persist for more than a short period, whose length is to be determined by national circumstances.

Globally, there has been a dramatic increase in casual employments due to such factors as: massive unemployment, globalization, the shift from the manufacturing sector to the service sector and the swell of information technology among other factors (Badmus, Oladiran & Badmus, 2020). Thus, with the emergence of more and new technologies in the workplace, the unskilled workers turns out to be more liable and defenseless (Campbell & Brosnan 1999). In recent times, this typical work relation has come to hold both the semi-skilled and highly skilled labour force.

Supply chain management is habitually anxious about the flow of physical materials that progress from one place – or one party – to another, but when bearing in mind modern slavery and contract slavery, the major rudiments of the chain are ones that ostensibly could be mislaid from

the normal 'supply chain', as they are frequently suppliers of workers – contract employment agencies, gang masters – instead of suppliers of products (Plant 2008; Barrientos 2008). The representation in figure 2 without a doubt illustrates the links amid the three stages consisting of suppliers of workers – contract employment agencies, gang masters, forming the modern supply chain contract slavery network.



Figure 2: Three Main Stages important for transmitting Modern Supply Chain Contract Slavery Network

Sources: Adopted from Plant, R. (2007). Forced Labour, Slavery and Poverty Reduction: Challenges for Development Agencies, *Presentation to UK High-Level Conference to Examine the Links Between Poverty, Slavery and Social Exclusion*. Foreign and Commonwealth Office and DFID. London: International Labour Organization.

Barrientos, S. W. (2013). Labour chains: Analyzing the role of labour contractors in global production networks. *The Journal of Development Studies*, 49(8), 1058-1071.

From the diagram, these third parties supply workers who may work for a company exclusive of being direct employees, even though to an informal observer, they may be impossible to tell apart. Contract workers are occasionally not openly enclosed by corporate codes of practice, which may take advantage of the probable vagueness of the terms 'supplier' and 'employee' (Barrientos, 2008).

The Concept of Social Sustainability

Sustainability is a major expression that connects economic, environmental and social issues in several disciplines, and in the supply chains, sustainability is distinguished as imperative in conveying enduring profitability by substituting monetary cost, value and speed as the established debate among businesses (Kaufmann & Carter, 2010; Mefford, 2011). Sustainability according to WCED (1987:24), stipulates that "humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". Acc-eke and Ikegwuru (2022:4) submit that, "sustainability is the aptitude to meet the necessities of existing customers at the same time as taking into consideration the necessities of upcoming generations". Social sustainability in the supply chain will involve all the management practices that drive businesses contribution to the increase and improvement of human potential and secure people from harm, thus taking into custody equally, negative and positive facets correspondingly (Awaysheh & Klassen, 2010). These embrace workforce policies for diversity and safety as well as human rights issues such as modern slavery. Sloan (2010) clarifies that developing sustainability concerning the social dimension demands the development and preservation of business practices that are just and favourable to the workers, and when adopted by the supply chain invariably help tackle concerns of modern

slavery. Contemporary supply chains should therefore, consider the social wellbeing of workers by improving labour conditions and standards, generating and transporting socially dependable goods and services.

Empirical Studies

Geng *et al.* (2022) espoused the awareness-motivation capability framework to concentrate on variations in companies' efforts to tackle modern slavery in supply chains, and their findings exposed that companies put more effort into dealing with modern slavery in their supply chains, when there is bigger media coverage of such matters, when they source goods and services from countries with tall slavery risks, and when they have launched corporate social responsibility records.

Flynn and Walker (2021) established that companies successfully used their modern slavery statements as a pointer to society that they are intensifying their policies to put off modern slavery in their supply chains, not least because companies established to be careless in tackling modern slavery could lose the sustenance of its economic and political stakeholders.

Meehan and Pinnington (2021) examined if the transparency in companies' supply chain statements signified that substantive action was being in use to deal with modern slavery in supply chains, and found that, companies apply indistinctness in their supply chain statements 'as a highly strategic form of action to defend the status quo, reduce accountability and delay action for modern slavery within supply chains', and that this ambiguity, successfully 'protects firms, rather than potential victims of modern slavery'

Benstead *et al.* (2020) examined modern slavery detection and remediation in supply chains by means of an action research case study in the textiles and fashion industry, and revealed that, 'a targeted audit', which included 'investigating the end-to-end recruitment process by using a parallel structure of management and worker interviews and documentation review', was more likely 'to identify key indicators of modern slavery'

Stevenson and Cole (2018) investigated how organizations in the UK reported on the detection and remediation of modern slavery in their supply chains and discovered that, many firms used the same practices to detect and remediate modern slavery as for other social issues, but that the concealed, criminal character of modern slavery and the participation of third-party labour agencies required novel exploratory methods

Bott (2018) reflected on emerging legislative disclosure regimes as a mechanism for regulating modern slavery in supply chains, and recognized 'four essential requirements', namely 'such legislation should integrate human rights due diligence; it must contain exhaustive disclosure requirements; there ought to be regulatory consequences for failure to conform: and lastly, it should make use of the governmental organizations (NGOs), unions, consumers and workers to standardize supply chains.

From the review of literature, the following conceptual framework was drawn:

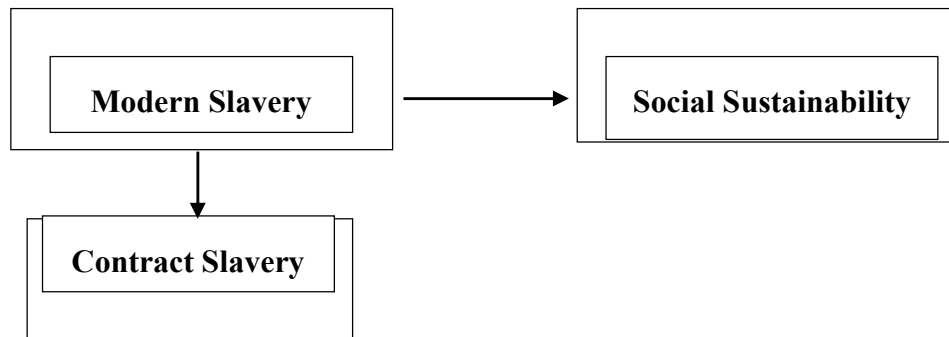


Figure 3: Conceptual Framework of Modern Slavery and Social Sustainability

Source: Designed by the Researcher, 2023.

From the conceptual framework, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₀₁: Contract slavery does not negatively impact social sustainability of contract staff of multinational companies in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative method in the form of an empirical study to conduct an investigation on the effect of contemporary supply chain slavery on social sustainability of multinational corporations in Nigeria. The target population of this research consists of contract or casual staff within manufacturing distribution and retail supply chains of thirty (30) multinational firms listed in the Nigeria Stock Exchange. However, owing to the wide-ranging nature of the multinational corporations, the study primarily focused on the contract staff of nine (9) multinational corporations' supply chain within Port Harcourt in the South-South region of Nigeria.

The researchers adopted the individual level unit of analysis and data were gathered from contract staff of multinational companies as key respondents. The study which is quantitative in nature employed questionnaire as the primary instrument for gathering data. As a result, the study employed a simple random sampling technique to draw twenty (20) contract staff from each 9 multinational companies studied and administered one hundred and eighty (180) copies of structured questionnaire on a one-on-one basis to gather quantitative data for the study. The simple regression statistical technique through the use of the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 was used for analysis. The multinational companies and questionnaire distribution is illustrated in Table 1:

Table 1: Multinational Firms and Questionnaire Distribution

NO	NAME	QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTION
1	Chevron Nigeria PLC	20
2	Shell Nigeria	20
3	Exxon Mobil Nigeria	20
4	Coca-Cola Nigeria	20
5	Airtel Nigeria	20

		i g e r i a	
6	Schlum	b e r g e r M i g e r i a	20
7	Saipem	M i g e r i a	20
8	Hallibu	r t c r E r e r g y	20
9	MTN	M i g e	20

		r	
		i	
		a	
	Total		180

Source: The Nigerian Stock Exchange (NSE), 2023

RESULTS

The aim of this section is to analyze the data and also present a discussion of the result from the analysis conducted and compare it with the literature reviewed. Out of 180 copies distributed to contract staff of 9 multinational companies, 145 copies accounting for 80% were retrieved for analysis.

Test of Hypothesis

The result of the regression analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Regression analysis showing the effect of contract slavery on social sustainability (N=145)

Model Summary									
Model	R	R ²	Adj R ²	Std Error of the Estimate	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	Durbin Watson
CS	.944	.704	.698	.067	2.739	1	142	.16.2	.981

a. Predictors: (Constant), Contract Slavery

b. Dependent Variable: Social Sustainability

Source: SPSS Window Output, Version 22.0 (based on 2023 field survey data).

Table 3: ANOVA of the effect of contract slavery on social sustainability (N=145)

Model	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	537.37	1	537.37	874.368	0.162
Residual	44.3975	144	8469	.	
Total	5817675	145			

a. Dependent Variable: Social Sustainability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Contract Slavery

Source: SPSS Window Output, Version 22.0 (based on 2023 field survey data).

Table 4: Coefficients of the effect of contract slavery on social sustainability (N=145)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient B	Standardized Coefficient Beta	t	Sig.	Correlations		
					Zero- order	Partial	Part
Constant	6.0437		2.54	0.162			
Contract Slavery	.774	.944	2.740	0.162	.944	.944	.681

a. Dependent Variable: Social Sustainability

Source: SPSS Window Output, Version 22.0 (based on 2023 field survey data).

The sum of social sustainability was regressed with the sum of contract slavery to examine the influence of contract slavery on social sustainability. The value of R is 0.944. The R (coefficient of correlation) value of 0.704 represents the correlation between contract slavery and social sustainability. It represents a strong correlation between the two variables. The R² (coefficient of determination) which indicates the explanatory power of the independent variable is 0.704. This means that 70.4% of the variation in social sustainability is explained by the independent variable. It shows that contract slavery makes a contribution of 70.4% to every change in social sustainability. The R² value as revealed by the result is high which means that about 29.6% of the variation in the dependent variable is unexplained by the model, denoting a strong relationship between the explanatory variable, contract slavery and social sustainability.

DISCUSSIONS

The results show that the level of contract slavery positively contributes to extremely bad social sustainability of contract staff contrary to the expected direction. This outcome in the current study could be because the respondents do not consider contemporary contract slavery as providing them with value for social sustainability in their given employment. Thus, contract staff in multinational companies in Nigeria who are conscious of their social state are very much concerned with the poor practices that breed contemporary contract slavery in the supply chains. Scott (2001) identified quite a few significant factors ensuing in contemporary supply chain slavery as, lack of government regulation, unregulated nature of business, and social culture. These antecedents of contemporary supply chain slavery as identified are vivid in the multinational firms in Nigeria.

Companies hiring contract staff have definite illegal practices that seek to maximize benefits, which consent to slavery to be perceived as suitable in confident state of affairs (Webb *et al.* 2009). Thus, multinational companies constitute a prime factor breeding contemporary supply chain contract slavery. Contract employment is a chief basis of predominance of poverty of these contract staff as they grapple with these key factors guaranteeing modern slavery. This is because employers of labour repeatedly engage these staff under contract employment, making them more susceptible to deception, which can situate them to being victims of modern slavery. Hence, contemporary supply chain slavery plays a major role in the pattern of social sustainability circumstance of contract staff of the multinational companies.

This result is consistent with Rassam (2005) who reports that the United Nations recognizes that the basis of contemporary slavery is that so many casual workers in the multinational companies are keeping their heads above water in disproportionate poverty. This result equally conforms to preceding contributions by (Benstead *et al.* 2020; Stevenson & Cole, 2018) whose studies indicate that, contract slavery constitutes a dynamic form of modern slavery in contemporary supply chains. This implies that the practice of contract slavery by multinational corporations in Nigeria can significantly contribute to extremely bad social sustainability of contract staff in contemporary supply chains.

CONCLUSION

The study established empirical evidence in consistence with existing literature and precisely contemplated on modern supply chain slavery, revealing that contract slavery frequently appears in contemporary supply chains of multinational corporations. The result of the simple regression analysis shows that contract slavery as a dimension of modern slavery has a strong negative impact on social sustainability of contract staff. The study therefore concludes that, modern slavery negatively impacts social sustainability of multi-national companies' supply chains in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With regards to the finding of this study, the following recommendations have been made towards contemporary supply chain slavery and social sustainability of multinational corporations in Nigeria.

1. Multinational companies in Nigeria should use certainty in their supply chain statements as a remarkably strategic form of action to expose the status quo, increase accountability and holdup action against contract slavery contained by their supply chains, thereby successfully protecting potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring social sustainability of contract staff in their firms.
2. Multinational companies in Nigeria should put more effort into handling modern slavery in their supply chains.
3. Multinational companies in Nigeria should adopt good practices to identify and remediate modern slavery in their supply chains.

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