

Reflection on the Impact of Children trafficking in Africa: A Case Study of a Selected Girl in Amma Darko's *the Housemaid*.

Abstract:

Human trafficking is the fact of taking children or adults from a given country or town to another one for a remunerative goal. Nowadays human trafficking has become a pandemic across the world because of its quick proliferation so it is an international preoccupation. Considering its widespread throughout the world, this phenomenon does not miss a reason. Human trafficking has many causes and its impact is very clear. Indeed, many researchers and organizations consider children trafficking as a crime against humanity. In Africa, many people choose this odd activity to achieving their hidden goal. Human trafficking is very dangerous to the humanity because of its gravity. The purpose of this article is to highlight through a literary study the impact of children trafficking in Africa: a case of a selected girl in Amma Darko's *the Housemaid*. In this novel, there were many little girls who have been trafficked via the channel of one of their citizens for the purpose of house chores, hawking, prostitution and other hard activities. The result of this research reveals that poverty and the search of easy gain by certain parents are the principal cause of children trafficking in this novel. The study also showed that the children trafficking has plenty of bitter impacts on Ghanaian societies like living in the streets, prostitutions and unwanted pregnancy.

Keywords: impact, human trafficking, prostitution, house chores, hawking.

Introduction:

Amma Darko is a Ghanaian woman writer. Her style of writing, her master of language of writing and her commitment of defending African womens right made her become a great and famous writer in African literature. Her writings constitute numerous moral messages which go to the profit of women in general and African ones in particular. Her novel *The Housemaid* is one of her writing productions that highlighted through a critical tone the situation of African girls. In the book, she explains african girls' bad situations, in cause of poverty they leave their families to join the town to work for their survival. In the novel, she demonstrates how certain parents flee their responsibility by letting their children be trafficked by certain traffickers who go with them to the town on the behalf of working but

in reality, they exploit them. In fact, Children trafficking or human trafficking is a universal disease that affects the five continents. Many international organizations have substantiated that human trafficking is a world problem and is considered as a crime. In a report made by TeachUNICEF in 2012, they showed that “the crime of trafficking in persons affects virtually every country in every region of the world” (1). Indeed, this bad and odd activities of human trafficking in most of the time concern the people with a low position in the society and mostly the children and the youth as it is reported by UNICEF in 2012 that “Human trafficking exists in the United States and around the world today, and it particularly affects children and youth. This is a human rights violation, it is unacceptable (3). Another report is made by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2007 by classifying the human trafficking as “one of the most egregious violations of human rights in the world today” (UNODC 2007:1). A work conducted by Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) in 2024 shows that Child trafficking is one of the worst forms of violence against children and a grave global concern that requires urgent and comprehensive action (3).

However, it is all recognized that Human trafficking is a universal phenomenon which many scholars and organizations have given different definitions. For instance, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2018 has defined human trafficking as

“Trafficking in persons’ shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation (10).

According to International Labour Office (ILO):

human trafficking or trafficking person is the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, for the purpose of exploitation for forced labour, slavery, servitude, sexual exploitation or removal of organs (ILO, 2015:10).

In referring to the above definitions, we can say that human trafficking is a phenomenon which consists of bringing children, adults, men, women, girls or boys in some areas that are not theirs to look for money through hardship works which result to the prostitution and many

other negative activities. Moreover, besides from its different definitions, this human trafficking has numerous causes. Many researchers, national and international organizations have made a lot of anthropological investigations to situate the causes of human trafficking in the society. For example, HM Government (2010) stated that the principal causes of human trafficking are poverty, lack of education, discrimination, cultural attitudes, grooming, dysfunctional families, political conflict and economic transition, and inadequate local laws and regulations (15). According United Nations (2014) there are many factors that increase human trafficking which include poverty, violence and discrimination (UN 1). However, regarding to these various previous overviews on the cause of human trafficking, we can conclude that the principal causes of human trafficking are: poverty and the lack of applying rigorously the laws and regulations on the traffickers. In fact, a poor family very liable and very exposeon the risky of letting their children be trafficked. UNODC states that Human traffickers' prey on people who are poor, isolated and weak (UNODC,2008:3).

This article examines through a literary approach Amma Darko's novel the *Housemaid*. This work intends to clarify the impact of Children trafficking in Africa: A Case Study of a selected girl in Amma Darko's the *Housemaid*.

1. **A girl trafficking in the *Housemaid***

Human trafficking has numerous negative impacts on the better function of human being. Many researches show that human trafficking has many impacts on the trafficked. In a report made by UNODC in 2007 in which they have showed that:

Human trafficking has an impact on the individuals it victimizes in all areas of their lives. Every stage of the trafficking process can involve physical, sexual and psychological abuse and violence, deprivation and torture, the forced use of substances, manipulation, economic exploitation and abusive working and living conditions. Unlike most other violent, crimetrafficking usually involves prolonged and repeated trauma. Documentation and research describe how men, women and children are abused in specific exploitative conditions and the short- and long-term physical injuries, disabilities and deaths that may result. For a number of specified reasons, trafficked persons are at great risk of HIV infection (UNODC, 2008 :9).

The above excerpt shows clearly that human trafficking has numerous impacts on the victims and a quick resolution must be thought.

In fact, In the *Housemaid*, Efia is among the main characters who has suffered from human trafficking. In the novel Efia is the victim of family plot. The plot is organized under the complicity of teacher (Child traffickers in the novel). A child trafficker According to ILO (2015) is anyone who contributes to an element of the trafficking process with the intent to exploit the child. This includes those who play only a part in the entire process, such as recruiters, intermediaries, document providers, transporters, corrupt officials, service providers and unscrupulous employers (ILO 2015:13). The above quotation defines us who is a child trafficker and his or her collaborators. In the *Housemaid* Teacher is a child trafficker and her collaborators are Tika, and Efia's family.

2. How Efia is trafficked in the Housemaid?

In this *Housemaid* Amma Darko uses the character Teacher to show the images of the traffickers. Teacher's attitudes toward the girls translate typically what the human traffics are doing. Human trafficking consists of transporting people or recruiting them illegally for a specific profit based on the purpose of having money or other services (ICAT 2018; OJJDP. 2016; Megbowon and Uwah, 2022). In the *Housemaid*, Teacher is one of Kataso native women who live in the town. Teacher at first round was also a maid, but her boss enrolled her in a school and progressively she succeeded and became a school teacher. Teacher is an attribute that the author gives her due to her jobs. Moreover, both Teacher and Tika originated from Kataso and they live together in the town. When Tika had a complication during her deliverance which generated the cutting of her womb, she asked Teacher a maid who can help her at home for housing chores and this maid must be one from her village. In the story, Teacher promised Tika to find her a maid soon, that why they took an appointment of going to the village together for this purpose. In the novel Amma Darko relates how Teacher and Tika go to Kataso looking for a maid. In Kataso, they encountered Efia's family. They gave them a present which can help them to have their confidence easily. That is the strategy of the traffickers. They use all the strategies to convince the family of the victims before taking their children. Rafferty (2007) states that traffickers use psychological manipulations and coercive methods to maintain control over their victims and to make their escape virtually impossible by destroying their physical and psychological defences (2).

In this book, Teacher uses this method of corrupting Efia's family by bringing them something from the town in order to make them weak psychologically to accept her offer. Teacher as a native and respected and intellectual woman originated from Kataso, is assigned the role of recruiting girls from this village to the city to fulfil the houses chorus:

Among the few Katasoans in Accra with formal jobs and comfort of a home, one of whom had been Tika's father, was a lady called Teacher by virtue of her profession (Darko,34).

In the above quotation Darko shows Teacher's profile and her recognition by her dirty jobs against Kataso's girls, that why Amma Darko explains Teacher's dirty jobs in the following lines:

Because of her position, Teacher was often given the task of getting young girls from Kataso position as housemaids with families in Accra. Usually, a guarantee was given that, after the girl had served for four years, her training as a dressmaker or hairdresser would be sponsored. As a result, Teacher was very well known among the Accra Katasoans, Tika included (35).

In the novel, Amma Darko explains us how Teacher and Tika proceeded to recruit Efia to go to the town. In the following quotation, Amma Darko shows us how they come in the Kataso's village and how the villagers welcome them. Darko argues:

When they were seated, the villagers welcomed the city dwellers, and the city-dwellers thanked them and presented their loaves and bread. Then teacher set the ball rolling, going over their mission again. Efia's people went to one side and put their heads together as if they were hearing everything for the first time. When they re-joined the others, Papa Kaawire spoke, his eyes fixed on Tika (41).

The above quotation explains how Teacher and Tika gather Efia's family to explain their bad mission. Once with Efia's family, the conversations start with Teacher and Efia's family to the procedure to follow in order to traffic Efia. The following discussions will explain the process:

Tika: I travel a lot, so I need her to be honest and reliable, because the whole house will be in her complete care on many occasions. It is important for me to be able to trust her enough not to have to worry about my home when I 'm away.

Efia's mother: And chores? Efia's mother asked

Teacher: The basics. If she can clean, wash, sweep and cook well, that's it, Teacher replied.

Grandmother: So now can we also know how you intend to reward our child for her services? (4)

The above short discussions show how these people bargain Efia as a product to sell in the market. The traffickers with the plot of their plotters want by all the price to traffic Efia. In the light of this conversation, we can understand that these women are ready to fulfil bad thing against Efia, that why they even put away Efia's father from their discussion of sending Efia to the town and the father has shocked with Efia's mother. The following quotation shows their hot discussion:

Efia's father:" What are we getting out of our daughter's going away to the city to serve somebody "didn't we take care of her up to this stage? And if we hadn't fed her up now, would she have grown strong enough to be able to serve her?

Efia's mother: that was our responsibility, or? We did no one a favour feeding our own child, or?

Efia's father: You prepared well for a confirmation? Eh Silence. And she leaves tomorrow, you said? Efia's mother: Yes. The ensuing atmosphere was tense, and heavy with suspicion and suspense (43-44).

The above hot conversion between Efia's parents shows that the father does not agree about her departure but unfortunately the mother does. As we know in the society, a mother has a high influency on her children namely girls. Efia's mother come to convince Efia to go to serve another woman just for their hiding black interest which consists of exploiting her. In fact, it is under the strategies of the tackifiers to target the poor people for their misdeed. In the novel, we discover that Efia's family is poor, they live day by days life. Even if they want to eat, they have to go to the farm immediately to look for food (cassava).

Mother, we don't have enough cassava for this evening's fufu. I have to go and uproot some more, she told her (44).

In the light of their plight and hardship life, the remaining family try to explain to the father that it is by lucky that Efia is chose to be trafficked. They show him that there are many girls in the village who are waiting for this type of occasion to leave the village. And the family tries to convince him that in this chance, there is even some divinity events that intervene in their family. The following quotation will explain this fact:

Of all the extended family members, why did Teacher settle on us? She could have gone to the family house, or? look at all the girls cramped in there just waiting for an opportunity like this. Yet Teacher took just one look at our Efia and decided she was the one. Why? Because the ghost chose someone who could hear and understand his distant voice-me (45).

According to the above quotation, Efia's family is a blessing. But unfortunately, Efia's suffers more in this situation, the following point will highlight the impact of this trafficking.

3. The negative impact of Efia's trafficking

In the *Housemaid*, Efia is trafficked to work for Tika as a housemaid and housekeeper. Teacher with the complicity of Efia's family, oblige Efia to be with Tika for house chores and other hardship activities. The reasons why Efia's family wants her, by all means, to be with Tika is because they hide something in their heart. This thing is a plan that they organize which consists of pushing Efia become very important to Tika to gain her confidence up to the point that Tika will not do anything without Efia. Efia's parents know that Tika is very rich. Her wealthy derived from her mother who sponsored her in business. She is a great business woman whom her mother sponsors her and she does not have any child and even her womb was cut due to a complication that she had during her deliverance. In the following passage, Darko exposes how Efia's family discusses on Tika's situations and their intention about her:

the old lady seems to be proving how mad she was she turned to Efia, listen! The woman you are going to live with is a rich but wasted woman.

Mother!

A very wasted woman.

Mother please!

An unproductive womb is bad enough. But no womb at all? And that is what she is. A walking woman with no womb inside her (Darko,46).

They plan several strategies in order to make Efia dominates Tika to have a child who in the future will inherit her since she has not gotten a child. The discussion continues:

'So, hear me! Be subservient, humble and very dependable...

Good advice, mother! «then get yourself pregnant.

W-h-a-a-t?

You both heard me right. Efia, you will live with her, win her affection, become indispensable to her. So that when you innocently become pregnant...

Innocently?

How does she become pregnant innocently?

Efia's mother asked. By pretending she was forced into the sexual act, the old lady replied.

By whom? The mother again.

It doesn't matter. Hers is just to get pregnant.

How? asked Efia innocently.

“fool! By sleeping with a man. How else? Her mother yelled, warming to the old lady's plan, whatever it was.

Don't tell me you don't already know about that. The old lady cast her daughter a curious look and smiled a little.

Then she turned back to her granddaughter. ‘on second thoughts, she began, when you get pregnant, refuse to name the father (Darko, 46-47).

In this above discussion, Darko explains the objective of this plan in which Efia's family wants by all cost to be with Tika. However, once Efia be with Tika, she tries to implement the plan that their family assigned her. Efia receives to have the total confidence of Tika, that why Tika says: Oh, Efia what would I do without you? And she told Teacher, I would be lost without her (Efia) (51). One day, when Tika was absent, she entered a man with whom they plan to have sexual intercourse. In the same day; Tika forgot something at home and she has to come back to take it, she tries to open the doors but unfortunately all the doors were locked by Efia. After Tika has insisted that Efia unlocked after hiding her guy in the chamber. Tika wonders on the situation, Darko relates their discussion as follow:

Tika: “Can you tell me what was going on in here? Tika demanded angrily”.

Efia: “Nothing, madam, ‘Efia answered, like an angel”. Tika was beside herself with rage.

Tika: Don’t you dare madam me so monkey-politely! Do I look like a fool to you? Who were you? mumbling to inside just now?

Efia: No one madam. She spoke so impassively, Tika fumed even more.

Tika: You were in here with somebody doing God knows what, and you made whoever it was leave by the back door before you let me in. Isn’t that it?

Efia: No, madam. A helpless and defeated Tika was raging at fever pitch.

Tika: ‘How do I handle this? She thought. What am I to do? And how long has this thing been going on? God! The girl sometimes has this house to herself for a whole week. What goes on then? And yet, how can I get on without her? I have no option but to report this to your people. I must let them know that I cannot tolerate situations like this (Darko, 54).

After this conversation with Tika, Efia is hiding her guy under the bed. When she is sure that Tika goes out, she returns to her man to continue their affairs. Efia argues: Let’s do it again, when your milk is coming don’t remove your thing” (Darko, 55).

This above short quotation shows that Efia is ready to be in pregnant to accomplish the mission that her family consigned her.

Efia had a sexual intercourse with one of Tika man willingly and finally fell pregnant. After her pregnancy, Tika informs Teacher that she will send Efia to her family. Behind many confrontations and numerous setting for negotiations, the family bear Tika to keep Efia up to her Delivrance:

Madam Tika, please, in the name of the great Almighty God, and for the sake of our ancestors, please don’t abandon our daughter. Have mercy on us. Have pity on us. What can we do for her? Look at us. Look at her father. You saw everything for yourself, didn’t you? Oh God! And still she sniffed, sniffed, sniffed. Madam Tika, Efia’s mother proceeded, please don’t send Efia back to us. Please! And when she delivers, too please, the baby is yours. We are donating it to you. Please!

Yes, Madam Tika, listen to the voice of an old woman. My grandchild is yours too. Keep her. And when she delivers, my great grandchild is yours too. It was God-sent, believe me. The gods and ancestors also willed it. It is your child (Darko,66).

Despite many interventions for the negotiation to convince Tika to keep Efia up to her deliverance, Tika declines their wish and finally she sends Efia to her family. After Efia has been sent to her family she found herself in terrible situations. The situations through which she has already be accustomed with the townand its luxury principal Tika's house where she is free to eat whatever she wants, but unfortunately, she has to leave it and join her mates in their way of living. These girls suffer more in the town.they are exposed in many dangers from the health up to morale one. They are not psychologically free. When Efia joins them and she requests Akua to stay with them but she advises her as follow "whatever happens, and however bad it seems, you will still be safer there than here. Look at the way we live here (Darko, 96).

Regarding the conditions in which these girls live, each one relates her inner anger to Efia:

Akua: As for me, fortunately work has been suspended on my building. I hear the owner has travelled to some country to get work and make more money to come back and complete it. So, for the next year at least, neither Atinga nor any of them will see my pants (Darko, 95).

One girl said "I have my own problems. The owner of my base has returned from abroad and wants to resume work on his building, so I had to bribe Atinga yesterday with a couple of quick rounds behind the blue kiosk to get him to find me a new place (Darko, 95).

However, in Efia's situation, Amma Darko explains how Efia is trafficked by Teacher underher mother's complicity and grandmother yoke. They use her infancy and her naivety to exploit her. Their plot is not achieved in any way apart losing and total deception. Efia becomes prostitute in cause of her family instruction to become so. Amma Darko shows the lust of having something easily will not willingly force you to have it. If Efia's family let Efia work well in Tika's family without any intention of earning her wealth easily, she would gain Tika's confidence and Tika will give her all, but unfortunately, they failed in their odd plan. That why after Efia joins her friends in their way of living and looksfor their help about her pregnancy. She gets pregnant of the man that she slept when Tika was absent. Efia delivers her son in a very difficultsituation without any medical supervision. She deliversa

stillborn baby and through it in a bush near Braha village. This is how Efia ended. She suffered from trafficking, from doing hardworking, doing prostitution, abandoned, risky contracting with a disease, having pregnant, unhealth deliverance etc....

Through this article, the direct impact of Efia's trafficking is her hardworking in Tika's house, freedom of having sexual intercourse with somebody without any protection, unwanted pregnant, the dirty conditions of her deliverance, the social and psychological frustration and the loosing of what they intended to have which consist of inheriting Tika's wealthy.

Conclusion:

This article dealt with the impact of human trafficking in Africa: A case study of a girl in the *Housemaid* by Amma Darko. In this article, apart from its various definitions, it is clear that human trafficking is a worldwide matter which consists of transporting people from one place to another for financial purpose. It is a general view that, human trafficking has numerous negative impacts on human being. In the *Housemaid*, Amma Darko uses the character Teacher to show the images of human traffickers. Teacher takes advantage of Efia's family poverty with the complicity with Tika to traffic Efia. Under the plot of her family, Efia was exploited in Tika's house with the hardworking and being volunteer prostitute. Finally, Efia found herself in many several negative impacts like prostitution, unwanted pregnant and psychological trauma, sanitation risky and so on and so forth.

In this work, I recommend all the social layers like civil societies, trade unions, media, and NGOs to invest on sensitizing through social media, radio, televisions and other channels about the negative impacts of human trafficking. The government in their side must apply the law rigourously against the traffickers by amending them or putting them into jail.

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