



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITY FOR INTER-AGENCY COOPERATION

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Abstract

Human trafficking is a pervasive and complex issue in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for victims, communities, and the nation as a whole. Despite efforts to combat trafficking, the problem persists, and effective solutions remain elusive. This paper explores the challenges and opportunities for inter-agency cooperation in addressing human trafficking in Nigeria. Through a qualitative research approach, this study examines the perspectives of key stakeholders, including law enforcement, social service providers, and government officials. The findings highlight the need for improved communication, coordination, and collaboration among agencies, as well as the importance of addressing underlying structural and societal factors that contribute to trafficking. The study concludes by recommending strategies for enhancing inter-agency cooperation and providing a framework for a comprehensive and sustainable approach to combating human trafficking in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Human Trafficking, Challenges, Opportunity, Inter-Agency, Cooperation*

1.0 Introduction

Criminal activities that spread across national boundaries has exacerbated what is now known as human trafficking which involves enticement and kidnapping of both male and female genders for the purpose of selling to groups or individuals to harness the potential of the victims either for sexual or for labour purposes. This ugly phenomenon has become a thorny issue in respect to human as well as national security and governance all over the world.

In other words, trafficking is an emerging concern globally that is gaining increasing attention from the international community. Many countries around the world since last decade have made tremendous strides in democratic consolidation and advance the cause of cooperation, while enjoying a surge in economic growth. Battered by economic and political intrigues during the 1980s and 1990s, and undermined by challenges in governance, many countries emerged into the new millennium with a renewed sense of purpose and identity (Muraszkiewicz, 2016).

Economic growth has been on a rising trend since the middle of the last decade, powered by high commodity prices across natural resource-rich countries. The push toward greater openness is



reinforced by an increasingly educated and impatient youth clamouring for change in order to have their voices heard. The advent of social media, technological innovations, and globalization has multiplied avenues and opportunities for expression and participation that previous generations could only have dreamed of, all the while fostering greater accountability and transparency (Olaiya, 2014). The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (NAPTIP) is the statutory agency specifically created to combat trafficking. It cooperates with Anti-Human Trafficking Units of the Immigration, Custom, Police services and other concerned ministries, international organizations and NGOs. All these amongst others combined to combat human trafficking.

In Nigeria, victims are usually trafficked for the purposes of prostitution, begging, domestic servitude and other types of underpaid and exploited forced labour (United Nations Office Drugs and Crime, 2020). Information given by NAPTIP reflected a total of 1,109 victims identified and provided assistance at one of NAPTIP's eight shelters throughout the country during the reporting period; 624 were cases of trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation and 328 for labor exploitation. Various security agencies referred trafficking victims to NAPTIP for sheltering and other protective services: immigration referred 465; police referred 277; Social Services referred 192; and the State Security Service referred nine (Trafficking in Persons Report Country Narrative, 2018).

Human trafficking is a serious violation of human rights and a significant threat to global security. Nigeria is a major source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking, with victims trafficked within the country, as well as to other countries in Africa, Europe, and Asia. Despite efforts to combat human trafficking, the problem persists in Nigeria, and effective solutions remain elusive. The lack of effective inter-agency cooperation is a significant challenge in addressing human trafficking, as it hinders the coordination of efforts, sharing of information, and provision of services to victims.

2.0 Literature Review

Anti-Human Trafficking and Inter-Agencies Relations

In terms of the global fight against human trafficking, Peters (2018) claims that the application of policies brings together different organizations to work toward a cooperative relationship in order to accomplish specific objectives. Numerous connections between implementing organizations lead to the development of mutual correlations between them. Because of this interdependence, coordination and communication are necessary. However, achieving the goals of anti-human trafficking policy is hampered by a disjointed implementation process.

According to Grindle (2017), coordinating is both a difficult undertaking and an essential component of any integrated program meant to achieve favorable anti-human trafficking results. Organizational competition has had a detrimental impact on a number of initiatives by limiting communication and inter-agency collaboration. Every day, the industry of human exploitation increases catastrophically. Nunez and Meylaerts (2017) assert that communication plays a crucial role in demonstrating the impact of policies, their practicality, and the degree to which they are put into practice. All it takes to safeguard and put the policy into practice is effective communication. When a policy is well-stated and has a clear channel of communication, it can be executed successfully.



Territorial game was identified by Grindle (2017) and Hill and Hupe (2014) as a major barrier to inter-organizational coordination in the fight against human trafficking. For most agencies in this situation, being able to handle its duty on its own is essential. An agency or organization won't cooperate if coordination infringes on its autonomy unless there are distinct and significant benefits.

According to Ruffing (2015), a danger to independence increases when there are multiple, interconnected organizations, coordinating agency operational methods are diverse, and partners' interests diverge. The nature of the decisions to be taken in a complex study like human trafficking necessitates extensive levels of communication and resource exchange. Furthermore, cooperative teamwork is needed for coordination of human trafficking raids, operations, and consultations. Implicit organizational rivalry, jealousies, and a propensity to hoard information rather than share it were frequently brought about by this circumstance.

According to Donina and Hasanefendic's (2019) research, there is variation between Portugal, the Netherlands, and Italy when it comes to the policy changes made in higher education institutions. According to Haffar, Al-Karaghoul, Irani and Gbadamosi (2019) research, the absence of a clearly defined organizational task has an impact on implementation. This is because it frequently results in inconsistent responsibilities and various players involved, which can negatively impact the performance of anti-human trafficking agencies.

Issues Surrounding Human Trafficking

Muraszkiewicz (2016) asserts that trafficking in persons is a global concern. Sexual exploitation is still fueled by the need for sexual fulfillment, sexual cravings, and financial considerations everywhere in the world. When victims are coerced into the industry or tricked into becoming migrant laborers in the commercial sex trade, this can also be called forced labor. The offer to enter the company is harmful because it promises victims that their lives will improve and that they can't avoid happiness by using their bodies to make money (UNODC, 2015). Das (2016) highlighted that human trafficking is a threat to crime control in Russia and former Soviet states like Ukraine and Moldova because of the country's economic circumstances. Women are easily recruited into the illicit trade and exported from Russia because they are unable to find paid employment or meet their families' basic needs for food and shelter. According to Clark (2003), "person trafficking is a distinct manifestation of globalization." This can be loosely defined as the post-Cold War era of a new global order between the capitalist USA and the communist Soviet Union. In most African republics, this era was also characterized by intra-state armed conflicts, which led to internal displacement, refugee flows, and an increasing number of orphaned female children. According to Adekoya (2018), NAPTIP coordinate actively by engaging with government agencies, law enforcement bodies, civil society organizations, international partners, and communities by developing and implement comprehensive prevention strategies. This collaboration should involve sharing information, resources, and expertise to enhance the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts across various sectors. By fostering strong partnerships and coordination mechanisms, NAPTIP can leverage the collective efforts of stakeholders to identify and address the root causes of trafficking, raise awareness, strengthen law enforcement, provide support to vulnerable populations, and ultimately prevent human trafficking in Nigeria.



Bantekas and Oette (2016) argued that Law enforcement and prosecution are pivotal aspects of NAPTIP's strategy for preventing human trafficking in Nigeria. The agency works in close collaboration with law enforcement bodies to investigate trafficking cases and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. Leveraging the legal framework provided by the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003, NAPTIP employs various tactics to disrupt trafficking networks and prosecute offenders. On his part, Okoye (2019) emphasizes that one key way NAPTIP contributes to preventing human trafficking is through conducting raids and operations aimed at rescuing victims and apprehending traffickers. These operations often involve coordinated efforts with other law enforcement agencies, such as the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigeria Immigration Service, to identify and dismantle trafficking syndicates. By conducting targeted raids and operations, NAPTIP disrupts the activities of traffickers and sends a strong message that trafficking will not be tolerated. International Organization for Migration, (2021) stated that, once a victim of human trafficking identified, ensuring the protection and support of trafficking victims is crucial for their well-being and recovery. However, providing comprehensive assistance to victims requires specialized resources, including access to shelter, healthcare, legal aid, psychosocial support, and reintegration services. NAPTIP faces challenges in meeting these needs due to limited resources, capacity constraints, and the diverse needs of trafficking victims.

According to Adekoya (2018), the Nigeria Immigration Service officer stated that the illicit business of human trafficking is caused by a number of factors, including poverty, ignorance, greed, the "get rich quick" syndrome, illiteracy, identity or moral bankruptcy, high demand for cheap and submissive child labor, false impressions of marriage preparation, unemployment, child marriage, child fostering, inequality in society, disregard for education, large family sizes, and those left orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. According to Okanlawon, Adebawale and Titilayo (2013), in addition to the challenges men engaged in sex work encounter while attempting to pursue justice because the police, customers, and syndicates who violate their rights in the process, Anuku (2016) states that the networks supporting sex trafficking are numerous and extremely powerful. Despite the efforts of the inter-agency collaboration in the fight against human trafficking, the agencies face a lot of challenges that is hampering its success, Lars and Victor (2014) noted the lack of trust and coordination also affects victim support. Delayed identification, inadequate services, and increased re-trafficking risk result from agencies' failure to coordinate effectively. Victim-centered approaches require inter-agency collaboration to provide comprehensive support, ensuring victims receive timely and appropriate assistance. Addressing the lack of trust and coordination requires a multifaceted approach. Agencies must prioritize transparency, accountability, and consistency. Regular training, capacity-building programs, and joint operations can foster trust and enhance collaboration. Establishing evaluation frameworks and monitoring progress can ensure effective coordination.

Olatunde (2020) agencies often operate in silos, failing to share critical data, best practices, and lessons learned. This lack of transparency undermines collaboration, leading to delayed or inadequate responses to trafficking cases. Standardized communication protocols and secure information-sharing mechanisms are essential to bridging this gap. Coordination challenges also arise from unclear roles and responsibilities. Overlapping mandates and conflicting priorities create confusion, leading to



inefficiencies and gaps in service provision. Clarifying agency roles, establishing memoranda of understanding and developing joint operational plans can facilitate seamless collaboration. UNODC (2020) that data collection and research are fundamental aspects of NAPTIP in combating human trafficking. Reliable data is essential for understanding the scope and dynamics of trafficking, identifying trends, and evaluating the effectiveness of anti-trafficking interventions. However, collecting accurate and comprehensive data on human trafficking presents numerous challenges. One challenge in data collection is the hidden nature of the crime, which often occurs clandestinely and goes undetected. Victims may be reluctant to come forward due to fear, shame, or distrust of authorities, leading to under reporting and inaccurate estimates of the prevalence of trafficking (Shelley, 2010). Moreover, trafficking operations may be highly organized and sophisticated, making them difficult to detect and investigate without adequate intelligence and information-sharing mechanisms. Additionally, variations in definitions, methodologies, and data collection practices among countries can hinder the comparability and standardization of trafficking data (United Nations, 2019).

Olatunde (2020) acknowledged that resource constraints pose a significant challenge for NAPTIP in its fight against human trafficking. NAPTIP, like many governmental agencies, operates within limited budgets and resources, which can hinder its ability to combat trafficking. Funding constraints, in particular, often limit the agency's capacity to carry out comprehensive anti-trafficking activities, including prevention, prosecution, and victim support programs. Without adequate financial resources, NAPTIP struggles to invest in essential areas such as manpower, training, equipment, and infrastructure, all of which are crucial for addressing the multifaceted nature of human trafficking. Similarly, United Nations (2019) in their study revealed that another serious challenge in the fight against traffic in Nigeria is that of funding. Without adequate funding, NAPTIP and other relevant agencies would find it difficult, if not outrightly impossible to intercept or prosecute some cases. In particular, NAPTIP needs adequate funding because of the chain of activities or programmes and responsibilities associated with fight against trafficking. When trafficked persons are intercepted, NAPTIP is responsible for their feeding, safe keeping and protection, medication, counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration to their families. All these will require huge amount of money, which at the moment is not available or rather grossly inadequate. NAPTIP also needs vehicles and other necessary working materials, which all involve funding. Lars and Victor (2014) in their study find out that NAPTIP operates within a complex institutional environment shaped by formal laws, policies, and international conventions addressing human trafficking. Institutional Theory highlights the importance of legitimacy, where NAPTIP strives to conform to established norms and expectations to gain societal acceptance and legitimacy. The agency faces pressures to comply with international standards, align with legal frameworks, and demonstrate effectiveness in its efforts. Compliance with institutionalized rules and norms is crucial for NAPTIP to maintain legitimacy and secure necessary resources and support. Study conducted by Johnson (2014), further revealed that NAPTIP's work is guided by formal rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures aimed at combating human trafficking. Additionally, informal norms and practices shape the agency's operations, such as its collaboration with international partners, engagement with civil society organizations, and victim-centric approaches. Understanding these normative structures helps assess how NAPTIP's actions align with prevailing institutional expectations and values in combating human trafficking.



Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Structural Functional Theory. The Structural Functional Theory, also known as Structural Functionalism, is a sociological perspective that was primarily developed by Émile Durkheim (Durkheim, 1895) and later expanded by Talcott Parsons, Robert K. Merton, and other sociologists. It is one of the major theoretical frameworks in sociology and political science, aiming to understand how society maintains stability and coherence through the interdependence of various social institutions and their functions. From a Structural Functionalist perspective, human trafficking may be seen as a phenomenon that arises due to dysfunctions or imbalances within the social structure (Parsons, 1951). Structural Functionalists would analyze how different social institutions (e.g., economy, family, government, law enforcement) play a role in either enabling or preventing human trafficking. For instance, weak legal systems or corrupt law enforcement may provide opportunities for traffickers to operate with impunity. The analysis would examine the manifest (intended) and latent (unintended) functions of human trafficking within the social structure. Manifest functions might include economic gains for traffickers, while latent functions could involve reinforcing gender inequality and undermining social cohesion.

The application of structural functionalism to security agencies provides a comprehensive understanding of their role in maintaining social order and stability. According to structural functionalism, security agencies, such as police, custom, immigration and intelligence agencies, play a crucial function in maintaining social control, preventing crime, and protecting citizens. They operate as a system, working together to ensure the safety and security of society. However, structural functionalism also acknowledges the potential dysfunctions of security agencies, such as abuse of power, inefficiency, and discrimination. These dysfunctions can undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of security agencies, ultimately threatening social order and stability. Despite these challenges, structural functionalism emphasizes the importance of security agencies in maintaining social cohesion and promoting collective well-being. By understanding the functions and dysfunctions of security agencies, policymakers and practitioners can work towards creating more effective, accountable, and just institutions that prioritize the safety and security of all citizens.

3.0 Methodology

The use of qualitative approach in Human Trafficking is not a new phenomenon and the approach is gaining wider acceptance in research (Dvora, 2007; Sadovnik, 2007; Berg, 2001 cited by Ibrahim, Halim, Adnan, and Jawan, 2023). The approach according to Maxwell (2005) “is an important tool for policy researchers”. Considering the nature of the study, the authors upheld the advice of Strauss and Cobin (1998) and Denzil & Lincoln, (2000) who explained that “qualitative study allow an in-depth understanding of phenomena under investigation from the perspectives of people that have in depth knowledge on the issues” In this regard exploring the challenges and opportunity for interagency cooperation perspective, can best achieved using the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2003).

The study adopts purposive sampling procedure to identify the research participants who would provide an in-depth data relevant to the study. Patton (2002) states that purposive sampling is based on selection criteria that would lead to valuable information, therefore, criteria for inclusion in this study



are (a) the participants must be from Government inter-agency, NGOs that are directly involved in combating human trafficking in Nigeria. (b) The participants must have an experience in handling human trafficking and trafficked person rehabilitation and reintegration issues (c) The participants that had close working collaboration with relevant actors in addressing human trafficking issues in Nigeria. (d) Participants must be a rescued Trafficked Persons that passed through the government shelter and (e) the participants that are willing to participate in this study. Based on the criteria listed fifteen (n=15) participants were involved in the study, the participants came from Government inter-Agency, Non-Governmental Organization and Trafficked Persons. Six (n=6) of the participants involved in the study are Government official from National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficked in Persons and Other Related Natters (NAPTIP) and security personnel, three (n=3) from NGOs (WOTLEF), and six (n=6) were trafficked persons (victims). The number (=15) of participants in this study was determined by the point of saturation, Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that sampling stopped once it reached a saturation point. Thus the authors interviewed (=15) participants when they realized the sampling had reached saturation point, the authors stopped further selection because it was no longer needed to increase the sample size beyond the saturated level (=15) when no new information and substantial contribution is forthcoming (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Semi-structured with open-ended questions in English language were conducted with participants. The interviews were conducted in a quiet, safe, conducive and at the time convenient to each participant (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The date of the interviewed were fixed by the participants at their appropriate and convenient time, All the interviews were conducted at the time range between 45 to 90 minutes, this is in line with the position of Guest et al (2013) that true in-depth interview needs 45 to 90 minutes. The authors followed the analytical procedures proposed by (Creswell, 2007). Firstly, the authors transcribed all the interviews. Secondly, each of the transcribed interviews was read, re-read and re-read in its entirety for the purpose of familiarization and preparation for coding. Thirdly, the authors reduced the collected data into various themes through the process of coding (Saldana, 2015 cited by Ibrahim, Halim, Adnan, and Jawan, 2023).

4.0 Findings and Discussions

Based on the responses from the interviews four major themes were identified; (1) Communication Barriers, (2) Lack Trust and Coordination (3) Funding and Resource Constraints, (4) Data Sharing and Management. The thematic findings show the challenges associated with human trafficking in Nigeria, challenges and opportunity for inter-agency cooperation.

Communication Barriers

Effective communication is very necessary in inter-agency collaboration against human trafficking, yet barriers persist. Language differences, varying protocols, and disparate data systems hinder information sharing and coordination. Insufficient training on trauma-informed communication and cultural sensitivity can lead to misunderstandings and mistrust among victims and agencies. Furthermore, technological limitations, confidentiality concerns, and bureaucratic silos exacerbate communication challenges. Addressing these barriers requires standardized communication protocols, interdisciplinary training, and secure data-sharing platforms. By bridging these gaps, agencies can ensure seamless coordination, timely interventions, and comprehensive support for trafficked victims,



ultimately strengthening the collective response to human trafficking. Informant SA3, NP2 and NO2 believed that agencies may not share information or data, creating silos that obstruct a unified understanding of human trafficking cases and different agencies may use varying terminology, jargon, or languages, hindering effective communication and collaboration among the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials. Informant SA1, NO3, NP1 and SA2 believed that lack of standardized communication protocols, data formats, and technology infrastructure hinders seamless information sharing and collaboration among the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials. Agencies may also be reluctant to share sensitive information due to concerns about confidentiality, data security, and potential leaks or misuse while informant TP 4, TP1, TP6 and TP5 argued that agencies' communication channels were not accessible or confidential and lack of access to interpreters hindered their ability to seek help.

From the information gathered from the respondents revealed that communication barriers hinder the effective sharing of data information, resources, and expertise among agencies, compromising the success of anti-trafficking efforts in combating trafficking activities. This statement collaborates with the findings of UNODC (2020) who argued that data collection and research are fundamental aspects of NAPTIP in combating human trafficking. Reliable data is essential for understanding the scope and dynamics of trafficking, identifying trends, and evaluating the effectiveness of anti-trafficking interventions. However, collecting accurate and comprehensive data on human trafficking presents numerous challenges. One challenge in data collection is the hidden nature of the crime, which often occurs clandestinely and goes undetected. Victims may be reluctant to come forward due to fear, shame, or distrust of authorities, leading to underreporting and inaccurate estimates of the prevalence of trafficking (Shelley, 2010). Moreover, trafficking operations may be highly organized and sophisticated, making them difficult to detect and investigate without adequate intelligence and information-sharing mechanisms. Additionally, variations in definitions, methodologies, and data collection practices among countries can hinder the comparability and standardization of trafficking data (United Nations, 2019).

Lack of Trust and Coordination

Lack of trust and coordination among inter-agency collaborators hinders effective response to human trafficking, allowing perpetrators to exploit vulnerabilities. Divergent priorities, turf wars, and competing resource interests erode trust, while inadequate communication and information sharing compromise coordination. Insufficient training, varying protocols, and fragmented services exacerbate these challenges. Furthermore, victims' experiences are often fragmented due to lack of continuity and consistency among agencies. Building trust requires fostering open communication, establishing clear roles and responsibilities, and developing memoranda of understanding. Enhancing coordination involves standardizing protocols, sharing data, and providing joint training to ensure seamless support for trafficked victims.

Informant SA3, NO1, SA2 stressed that insufficient joint planning and strategy development can result in mistrust and coordination challenges, highlighting the need for collaborative approaches and also power imbalances and hierarchical structures can lead to mistrust, resistance, and difficulties in coordinating efforts among the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials.



Another informant NP2 stated that ineffective accountability and evaluation mechanisms can lead to mistrust and difficulties in coordinating efforts, underscoring the importance of robust monitoring and assessment frameworks while informant TP1, TP5, TP4 and TP5 argued that the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials didn't prioritize building trust with survivors like them and inconsistent messaging and approaches created confusion. The outcome of the interview shows that the lack of trust and coordination among agencies is a significant challenge facing inter-agency collaboration in curbing human trafficking, as it hinders the sharing of critical information, resources, and expertise, leading to duplication of efforts and resources, gaps in protection and support for victims, inconsistent and ineffective policies and procedures, limited understanding of the scope and complexity of human trafficking, inability to leverage collective strengths and expertise and lack of accountability and transparency which is in line with the position of Adekoya (2018) and Donnelly (2013) whose study revealed that inadequate communication and information-sharing exacerbate the lack of trust. Agencies often operate in silos, failing to share critical data, best practices, and lessons learned. This lack of transparency undermines collaboration, leading to delayed or inadequate responses to trafficking cases. Standardized communication protocols and secure information-sharing mechanisms are essential to bridging this gap. Coordination challenges also arise from unclear roles and responsibilities. Overlapping mandates and conflicting priorities create confusion, leading to inefficiencies and gaps in service provision. Clarifying agency roles, establishing memoranda of understanding and developing joint operational plans can facilitate seamless collaboration.

In connection with the above submission, Lars and Victor (2014) note the lack of trust and coordination also affects victim support. Delayed identification, inadequate services, and increased re-trafficking risk result from agencies' failure to coordinate effectively. Victim-centered approaches require inter-agency collaboration to provide comprehensive support, ensuring victims receive timely and appropriate assistance. Addressing the lack of trust and coordination requires a multifaceted approach. Agencies must prioritize transparency, accountability, and consistency. Regular training, capacity-building programs, and joint operations can foster trust and enhance collaboration. Establishing evaluation frameworks and monitoring progress can ensure effective coordination.

Ultimately, overcoming the lack of trust and coordination among inter-agency collaborators is crucial to combating human trafficking effectively. By prioritizing transparency, communication, and coordination, agencies can streamline efforts, enhance victim support, and strengthen accountability. This cooperative approach will ultimately disrupt trafficking networks, protect vulnerable populations, and bring perpetrators to justice (Olatunde, 2020).

Funding and Resource Constraints

Funding and resource constraints significantly impede inter-agency collaboration in the fight against human trafficking, limiting the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts. Insufficient funding hampers agency capacity, staffing, and service provision, while resource shortages restrict access to vital services, training, and technology. Divergent funding cycles, priorities, and reporting requirements among agencies exacerbate these challenges. Furthermore, reliance on short-term grants and unpredictable funding streams undermines long-term sustainability and planning. Addressing these constraints requires diversified funding sources, streamlined grant management, and collaborative



resource sharing. By prioritizing financial stability and resource optimization, inter-agency collaborations can enhance support for trafficked victims, disrupt trafficking networks, and achieve lasting impact.

Informant NP3, NO2, SA1, NO3 and SA3 claimed that inadequate funding can limit agencies such as the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials' ability to collaborate, share resources, and effectively combat human trafficking and inadequate staffing, expertise, and capacity can hinder agencies' ability to collaborate, share knowledge, and respond to human trafficking cases. Another informant NP1 and SA2 stated that insufficient resources for data collection, analysis, and sharing can hinder inter-agency collaboration and effective response among the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials. Again, lack of necessary infrastructure, such as technology, transportation, or facilities, can impede collaboration and effective response while informant TP3, TP5, TP2 and TP1 stressed that funding constraints forced agencies to prioritize short-term solutions and hindered agencies' ability to address root causes. The outcome of responses in the study affirmed that funding constraints can impede inter-agencies' ability to respond to emerging trends and patterns in human trafficking activities which is in agreement with the finding of Olatunde (2020) who acknowledged that resource constraints pose a significant challenge for the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials in its fight against human trafficking. NAPTIP, like many governmental agencies, operates within limited budgets and resources, which can hinder its ability to combat trafficking. Funding constraints, in particular, often limit the agency's capacity to carry out comprehensive anti-trafficking activities, including prevention, prosecution, and victim support programs. Without adequate financial resources, NAPTIP, Nigerian police force and Nigerian custom service officials struggles to invest in essential areas such as manpower, training, equipment, and infrastructure, all of which are crucial for addressing the multifaceted nature of human trafficking. Similarly, United Nations (2019) in their study revealed that another serious challenge in the fight against traffic in Nigeria is that of funding. Without adequate funding, NAPTIP and other relevant agencies such as the Nigerian police force and Nigerian custom service would find it difficult, if not out rightly impossible to intercept or prosecute some cases. In particular, the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials needs adequate funding because of the chain of activities or programmes and responsibilities associated with fight against trafficking. When trafficked persons are intercepted, the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials are responsible for the feeding, safe keeping and protection, medication, counselling, rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficked victims to their families. All these will require huge amount of money, which at the moment is not available or rather grossly inadequate. NAPTIP and its sister agencies also needs vehicles and other necessary working materials, which all involve funding.

Data Sharing and Management

Effective data sharing and management are critical components of inter-agency collaboration among the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials in the fight against human trafficking. Standardized data collection, secure information sharing, and analytics enable agencies to identify trends, track perpetrators, and provide targeted support to victims. However, data fragmentation, inconsistent reporting, and concerns over confidentiality and privacy hinder collaboration. Establishing secure data-sharing protocols, developing common data standards, and



providing training on data management best practices can overcome these challenges. By leveraging data-driven insights, agencies can enhance victim identification, disrupt trafficking networks, and inform evidence-based policies, ultimately strengthening the collective response to human trafficking and ensuring justice for victims.

Informant SA3, NP1, NO3, NP2 and No2 affirmed that lack of standardized data collection and reporting hinder effective comparison, aggregation, and analysis of data across agencies, coupled with limited technological infrastructure, including hardware, software, and connectivity also impedes effective data sharing, management, and analysis among the collaborating agencies such as the Nigerian police force, Nigerian Immigration service, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials. Another informant SA2 believed that cultural and trust barriers among agencies can hinder effective data sharing, requiring efforts to build trust and foster a culture of collaboration. Furthermore, disputes over data ownership and control can also lead to information silos, hindering effective data sharing and collaboration among the Nigerian police force, Nigerian custom service and NAPTIP officials while informant TP5, TP3, TP1 and TP4 stressed that data privacy concerns hindered information sharing among agencies and insufficient data analysis limited understanding of trafficking trends”.

From the information generated from the study shows that insufficient data sharing leads to duplicated efforts, wasted resources, and a fragmented response to fight against human trafficking. This statement is in consistent with the assertion of International Organization for Migration (2020) who believed that combating human trafficking has become a growing priority for many governments around the world, information about the magnitude of the problem remains very limited. Despite a growing body of research on trafficking, many agencies with a role in combating trafficking do not systematically collect and analyze data that would allow them to judge whether their programmes are having the intended effect of preventing and reducing trafficking, protecting victims, and punishing offenders.

In connection with the above view, Nwabueze and Nwokeoma (2018) stated that another barrier to the fight against human trafficking is that there has been little uniformity in the application of the Palermo Protocol definition to identify trafficking in persons. In the 1990s, “human trafficking” was used interchangeably with the terms “human smuggling” or “illegal migration”. Today, the crime is still often confused with related crimes despite the Palermo Protocol, and many countries continue to mix trafficking data with other forms of irregular migration or migrant exploitation.

Furthermore, Adepoju (2021) affirmed that some programme characteristics impede impact assessments because there are overly broad objectives and diverse scope which diffuse potential impact; the impact of a short-term, smaller scale intervention may be difficult to attribute; there is little attention and funding (if any) devoted to programme evaluation; and complementary projects funded by different donors with different project time frames and assessment requirements make attribution of results to a single program difficult. Thus, the assessment of the long-term impact of counter-trafficking programmes is at an early stage, due to the lack of good quality data and programme design characteristics that impede evaluations. Local knowledge is critical in all stages of the evaluation from design to implementation to analysis. As counter-trafficking interventions are diverse, they do not allow for a unifying “outcome evaluation” framework which could be enhanced by additional research.



Monitoring, which is the component of the output analysis of a project, is also a critical precondition for evaluation. This involves collecting information through on site visits, from programme progress and financial reports, analyzing information and taking appropriate action.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, inter-agency cooperation is critical for addressing human trafficking in Nigeria. It requires a coordinated and collaborative response from various agencies and stakeholders. The opportunities for inter-agency cooperation, including the development of a coordinated national response, provision of training and capacity-building programs, and use of technology, must be harnessed to combat human trafficking effectively. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Nigerian government should develop a coordinated national response to human trafficking, which brings together representatives from various agencies and stakeholders.
2. The Nigerian government should provide training and capacity-building programs for agencies responsible for combating human trafficking, to enhance their skills and knowledge.
3. The Nigerian government should use technology to share information and intelligence, as well as to track and monitor trafficking cases.
4. Agencies responsible for combating human trafficking should improve coordination and communication among themselves,
5. Adequate funds should be made available for the interagency in order to have a smooth operation.

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