



TACKLING THE ISSUE OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING: INSIGHTS FROM NIGERIA

BY

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the Degree of Master of Arts in Peace Studies and Diplomacy

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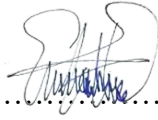
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Abstract

Human trafficking remains a serious issue and transnational crime in Nigeria. This study evaluated the issue of human trafficking in Nigeria with emphasis on the root causes of human trafficking, the role of governmental, non-governmental organizations and the various strategies for prevention, protection and prosecution in Nigeria. The study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design using questionnaires and interviews for data collection. A total of 385 questionnaires were distributed across selected communities in six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, while 368 were retrieved and collected for analysis. Interviews were conducted with 5 people from different institutions and organizations in the anti-trafficking field in Nigeria. The results indicate that poverty, unemployment, corruption and weak law enforcement are the major causes and factors contributing to human trafficking in Nigeria. Findings indicate that governmental and non-governmental organizations contribute to public awareness campaigns, victim rehabilitation and prosecution of traffickers although these efforts are hampered by inadequate findings. The results further indicated that increased public awareness, stronger law enforcement and sustainable rehabilitation programs are necessary for effective prevention and prosecution against human trafficking in Nigeria. The study concludes that despite various existing legal frameworks, human trafficking persists and continues to exist due to socio economic inequalities and poor implementation of anti-trafficking policies.

Keywords: human trafficking, human rights, law, crime.

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May God bless you all in Jesus' name 'Amen.

Mr. Godslead Junior Onyenemem

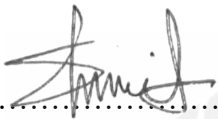
DEDICATION

This Independent Study is dedicated to the family of (Late) Mr. Francis Onyenemem Anene.



DECLARATION

I, Mr. Godslead Junior Onyenemem, with ID number 6317802001, do hereby declare that this research is entirely my own work and that it is original unless specific acknowledgements state otherwise. I have done this Independent Study by myself, under the close supervision of an advisor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human trafficking is transnational organized crime and a widespread violation of human rights. The growing spread of trafficking networks beyond borders has generated major humanitarian, socio-economic and security issues for governments, international organizations and civil society actors worldwide (Osuigwe, 2017). The magnitude of the problem has led to gravity of the coordinated actions from governments, non-governmental organizations, healthcare institutions, and international agencies working together to get rid of trafficking, help victims, and punish offenders. Okon and Akpan (2021) argued that human trafficking is one of the fastest-growing types of organized crimes throughout the world, which is a clear indication of the increasing level of skill and profitability of trafficking operations in different parts of the world.

Human trafficking is the practice of recruiting transporting transferring, harbouring, or receiving people using threat coercion deception, or taking advantage of their vulnerability to exploitation (Anurioha, 2024). Irele (2020) characterized human trafficking as a dehumanizing trade where human beings are treated as mere commodities for economic profits and gains. However, Okon and Akpan (2021) highlighted that trafficking is now one of the most lucrative criminal businesses in the world, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars for organized crime groups.

The impacts of human trafficking are not only wide-ranging but also extremely harmful to both victims and communities. Besides being subjected to harsh physical abuses, victims may also haul psychological scars and undergo emotional sufferings, be isolated from their societies, and

face financial losses. Omotoso et al (2022) pointed out that the effects of trafficking on victims are often so severe that they continue to experience both physical and mental problems even after they have been rescued and rehabilitated. Lawal (2023) disclosed that millions of people worldwide are still being exploited through trafficking. This has led to family disintegration, social unrest, and heightened vulnerabilities among the affected population.

The wide spread of human trafficking has made it one of the major problems in Africa as a number of factors such as the weak institutional structures poverty unemployment, conflict and irregular migration are the main hindrances to the fight against exploitation (Lawal, 2023). Nigeria is often regarded as mainly a source country, a transit point, as well as a destination country for trafficked individuals (Yakubu, 2019). Nigerian men, women, and children are trafficked both within the country and abroad. They are exploited in various ways including forced labour, sexual exploitation, organ harvesting, and other forms of abuse. The rising participation of organized crime networks in trafficking has made it harder to fight this crime both in the country and across its borders.

Sisay (2024) recognized the role of non-governmental organizations in raising awareness and highlighting the root causes against trafficking at the national and international levels. Orlando and Xiaolin (2018) indicated that non-governmental organizations have been essential in filling the gaps left by government institutions. He further noted:

“In dealing with the issue of human trafficking, non-governmental organizations have played a major role in offering help to victims by providing such services as assistance, advocacy, rehabilitation, and education, particularly in areas where governments cannot offer sufficient assistance due to some weaknesses within their structures.” (Orlando & Xiaolin, 2018, p. 29).

Organizations like the National Network on Human Trafficking (NATHAN) and the Women's Consortium of Nigeria (WOCON) have been consistently helping victims of trafficking by providing psychosocial support, vocational training, and temporary shelter.

Furthermore, worldwide teamwork continued to be very important in trying to fight cross-border trafficking gangs. Thus, IOM Nigeria (2021) underlined the importance of Nigeria's collaboration with international bodies like the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), and International Organization for Migration (IOM) to tackle human trafficking issues (Abiodun et al., 2021). Women and girls trafficked from Nigeria for sexual purposes are usually moved along well-known trafficking routes that connect Nigeria with countries like Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom. However, Yakubu (2019) contended that even with some improvements made through global collaborations, countries where human trafficking is carried out have not done enough to tackle the root causes and socio-economic factors that continue to foster trafficking in source countries like Nigeria.

Despite a range of measures put in place by government bodies, NGOs, and global organizations, human trafficking is still widespread in Nigeria. Elements like poverty, lack of jobs, ineffective police work corruption unstable politics, criminal gangs, and poor coordination among institutions are the reasons why the fight against trafficking is largely failing (Msuya, 2019). The Nigerian government having enacted the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act and setting up the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) to create a robust anti-trafficking response still it is a fact that inadequate funding, shortage of skilled personnel, poor data management systems and weak inter-agency collaboration restrain the effectiveness of these endeavours (Abiodun et al., 2021). They said:

“While Nigeria has established several initiatives designed to address the problem of human trafficking through legal and institutional reforms, these efforts have not been very successful in their implementation. Some of the reasons for this lack of success include insufficient funding, incompetent personnel, poor coordination among institutions, and inefficient information systems” (Abiodun et al., 2021 pg. 23).

The reintegration of trafficking victims into society still presents a number of major challenges which are difficult to overcome. Upon their return, a large number of trafficking victims suffer not only from being stigmatized, but also from trauma, unemployment, and difficulties in accessing social support services (Yakubu, 2019). Organizations have offered rehabilitation and reintegration services; However, the problem is far from being solved as the need for such services is way beyond the capacity of the institutions. As a result, human trafficking is still deeply rooted in Nigeria due to continuing socio-economic inequalities, cultural vulnerabilities, and weak law enforcement structures.

It is against this background that this study sought to examine the extent of human trafficking in Nigeria, identify the root causes and contributing factors sustaining the phenomenon, and critically evaluate the effectiveness of governmental, non-governmental, and international interventions aimed at combating human trafficking in Nigeria.

1.2 Research Questions

- ✓ What are the root causes and factors behind human trafficking in Nigeria?
- ✓ What are the functions of governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations in the fight against human trafficking?
- ✓ What are the strategies and recommendations to be suggested for the prevention, protection and prosecution in combating human trafficking in Nigeria?

1.3 Research Objectives

The following research objectives are the focus of this study:

- To examine the root causes and factors that contribute to human trafficking in Nigeria.
- To explore the roles of governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations in the fight against human trafficking.
- To propose new strategies for prevention, protection, and prosecution in tackling human trafficking in Nigeria.

1.4 Scope of Research

This research focused on the problem of human trafficking in Nigeria, covering the causes, patterns, impacts, and the efforts undertaken to combat human trafficking. This research focused on the socio-economic and cultural causes of the problem of human trafficking being prevalent in Nigeria. Furthermore, it explored different types of trafficking, such as forced labor, sexual abuse, and child trafficking, among others.

Further assessment was done by the study to assess the functions played by the governments, law enforcement, NGOs, and international organizations when dealing with human trafficking in Nigeria. Emphasis was made on the efforts undertaken by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in conjunction with other organizations concerned with human trafficking.

In terms of location, the investigation was limited to Nigeria alone, with international trafficking networks being mentioned only if the situation concerns Nigerians or any trafficking happening in Nigeria. The investigation focused on recent trends and events in the context of human trafficking for the sake of providing relevant information regarding current human trafficking events.

This study sought to evaluate the efficiency of the policies, laws, and measures that have been put in place to combat the vice of human trafficking in Nigeria. The study further sought to discussed some of the problems faced when trying to combat the vice, among which include corruption, poverty, unemployment, weak borders, and lack of awareness.

1.5 Statement of the Problem

Human trafficking remains a serious global human rights problem and one of the most rapidly expanding types of transnational organized crime, In particular in developing countries like Nigeria. Even with the setting up of legal setups, anti-trafficking agencies, and international partnerships aimed at addressing the issue, Nigeria still is a major source, transit, and destination country for trafficked persons (Irele, 2020). Also, the trafficked victims, most mainly women and children continue to be sexually exploited, forced to work, kept in domestic servitude, made to perform child labour, and even have their organs harvested both in Nigeria and abroad under very harsh and inhuman conditions (Okon & Akpan, 2021).

Poverty, unemployment, poor governance, gender inequality, lack of strong law enforcement, and the pressure through irregular migration have been identified by various researchers as some of the leading causes of the ongoing problem of human trafficking in Nigeria (Omotoso et al., 2020). Uduji et al. (2019) indicated that socio-economic implications and the aspiration for improved living conditions are the main factors which attract many Nigerians into the hands of traffickers who mostly disguise trafficking offers as emigrating for economic opportunities abroad. Okeshola and Adenugba (2018) also noted that weak institutional capacity and lack of sufficient rehabilitation programmes for the victims have continued to be major obstacles for the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria.

Though extensive efforts have been made by previous researchers to understand the causes and effects of human trafficking, many researchers in current times have concentrated mostly on socio-economic aspects of trafficking, migration trends, and legislation related to trafficking (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). However, there is very little empirical evidence that critically analyzes the success of combined efforts of various governmental, nongovernmental, and international organizations toward the problem of human trafficking in Nigeria.

Many studies highlight prevention and awareness campaigns as key; only a few have combined prevention, protection, and prosecution together in a single structure comprehensive enough to tackle all dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria. This forms a major research gap that needs to be filled by studies exploring ways of enhancing institutional collaboration, policy implementation, and strategic interventions for combatting trafficking in the most effective manner.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Combatting: This is the act of proactively combating or lessening something detrimental. However, in this context, combatting means engaging in efforts, policies, and strategies to fight against or stop human trafficking.

Human: Refers to a member of the species *Homo sapiens*, distinguished by characteristics like rationality, consciousness, and social behavior. But, in the context of human trafficking, "human" emphasizes that the victims involved are people.

Trafficking: In general, the illicit movement or trade of goods or people is referred to as trafficking. In the context of human trafficking, it specifically means the recruitment, transportation, harboring, or receipt of persons through coercion, abduction, fraud, or deception for the purpose of exploitation, often in forms such as forced labor, sexual exploitation, or slavery.

1.7 Limitation of Research

This research has various limitations, which might have influenced the scope and results of the research process. One of the major limitations of the research was the challenge of collecting data concerning human trafficking cases in Nigeria. Human trafficking is an issue that is both confidential and secretive; hence many victims prefer not reporting it for fear of blackmail and reprisals from the perpetrators of such crimes. Another limitation is the limited access to the victims/survivors of human trafficking. Restrictions of ethical issues, confidentiality, and security issues prevented conducting direct communication with trafficked persons. Thus, secondary information was used for analysis and included scholarly researches, governmental publications, documents, and interviews.

Furthermore, both financial and time limitations were major difficulties for conducting this research. The extensive use of the field method in Nigeria with its different areas involved huge costs and more time for research. Considering this difficulty, the research had to rely on chosen sources of information only. Another major limitation is that the study was limited to the Nigerian setting and therefore may not reflect the full dynamics associated with human trafficking elsewhere within Africa and around the world. While the existence of international networks engaged in the trafficking business is recognized, the main emphasis remains on Nigeria's problems. It is also important to note that despite the various limitations and challenges, steps were taken to make sure that the information used in this study was reliable, relevant, and adequate enough to provide useful knowledge about human trafficking in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Framework

2.1.1 Overview of Human Trafficking

According to Tarlow and Spencer (2025), human trafficking is one of the major examples of transnational organized crimes that poses a major human rights issue at the international level. This refers to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of people by means of threat, force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, or abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation. Uduji et al. (2019) stated that trafficking-related exploitation is not limited to forced labour and sexual exploitation, but can also refer to slavery or practices similar to slavery servitude forced marriage, the use of children in the commission of crimes and organ removal. The study further noted that

“Human trafficking entails many aspects of exploitation that go beyond the sexual exploitation and forced labor of victims. Other forms include slavery-like practices, forced labor, use of children in crime, forced marriage, and organ harvesting. The wide range of these exploitative acts highlights the different and changing facets of human trafficking today.” (Uduji et al., 2019, p. 52).

Human trafficking is seen in most parts of the world as a modern type of slavery because it takes away the liberty, dignity, and basic human rights from people. One of the factors behind trafficking extending its reach and becoming a trans-border crime is the globalization of world economies, the boom of transport and telecommunication means, and the growing disparities among people with wealth (Marion & Hufgard, 2025).

Every year, human trafficking impacts millions of people worldwide, with women and children being the most vulnerable groups. According to Okeshola and Adenugba (2018),

trafficking has become incredibly lucrative for organized crime groups mainly because of weak law enforcement corruption poverty, and increasing migration pressures. Human trafficking flourishes in places where there is high unemployment, armed conflicts, political turmoil, social exclusion, and lack of good economic opportunities. Sisay (2024) stated that trafficking has become so lucrative that it is now considered one of the largest criminal enterprises in the world, and drug trafficking and arms smuggling. Also, Irele (2020) pointed out that the harmful effects of trafficking do not only affect the victims but also their families and communities, and even the country's development, through increased insecurity, exploitation, and social instability. He further stated:

“Human trafficking, according to him, leads to wide socio-economic implications that affect families, communities, and the growth of nations in terms of their socio-economic stability and safety, thus forming a major obstacle towards sustainable development and social welfare”. (Irele, 2020, p. 33)

Various national and international programs have been launched to tackle the issue of human trafficking as it keeps on rising. Nigeria set up the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) and passed the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Act to enhance measures for the prevention prosecution victim protection, and rehabilitation. Also, NGOs and worldwide organizations like United Nations (UN), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Human Rights Watch (HRW) have consistently been providing help in anti-trafficking campaigns, assistance for victims, and effective awareness initiatives (Nugrahaningsih et al., 2020).

Human trafficking continues to be a serious problem in Nigeria, despite the various measures taken, mainly because the socio-economic inequalities, the facilities and resources of

anti-trafficking institutions are underfunded, the coordination of different agencies is insufficient and the existing policies are not well implemented.

2.1.2 Causes of Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is a multi-faceted problem which involves economically, politically, socially, and institutionally related factors. The existence of such trafficking cases across the globe implies that there must be vulnerabilities within the structure that are being utilized to generate profit. The causes of human trafficking in developing countries, like Nigeria, include poverty, unemployment, corruption, poor governance, erratic migration, and gender disparity; these causes continue to perpetuate human trafficking practices (Udiji et al., 2019). The interaction of all these factors increases the susceptibility of people to being abused and exploited.

2.1.2.1 Poverty

Poverty still serves as one of the most significant antecedents of human trafficking throughout the world, particularly within developing countries. Poverty coupled with the inability to meet basic requirements results in many people turning towards alternative sources of income, making themselves vulnerable to traffickers who promise them better jobs and improved standards of living (Tarlow & Spencer, 2025).

According to Cendana et al. (2019), the reality is that poverty leads to desperate situations, and traffickers take advantage of them in order to lure people who are willing to become victims. In Nigeria, many victims of trafficking come from poor families that have limited access to education, health care, and job opportunities. The study further stated that:

“The high prevalence of poverty and difficult economic conditions create circumstances of vulnerability that allow the traffickers to exploit the vulnerability of such persons through deception and promising better conditions of life. As a result, many of the victims of trafficking in Nigeria come from poor families that lack basic social amenities and means of livelihood”. (Cendana et al., 2019, p. 63).

Omotoso et al. (2022) noted that poverty has greatly resulted in dangerous migration and exploitation because of the efforts of young people to improve their economic and social well-being.

2.1.2.2 Unemployment and Economic Inequality

One of the major reasons for the increase in human trafficking is the high level of unemployment and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Many people, especially young ones, who are out of work for a long time have made the decision to leave their countries to look for better living conditions abroad. Nepal (2020) pointed out that traffickers take advantage of the vulnerable situation of youth unemployment as a way of luring in their victims through false promises of good-paying jobs, scholarships or travel opportunities. Economic disparities between developed and developing countries have, at the same time contributed to the desire to migrate among vulnerable populations (Cockbain and Bowers, 2019). As a result, numerous victims are ready to take dangerous migration paths even when they are not fully aware of the exploitative conditions (Nepal, 2020).

2.1.2.3 Weak Governance and Corruption

Ikyernum (2022) indicated that corruption of immigration officers, border officials, police, and judicial authorities is one of the factors helping trafficking activities as these traffickers are not getting arrested and prosecuted (Ambagtsheer, 2021). In Nigeria, lack of proper coordination among different institutions, insufficient financing of agencies fighting trafficking, and law enforcement mechanisms that are not very effective have hampered the efforts to combat trafficking. Corruption in the public sector has further led to poor enforcement of trafficking laws and less accountability of the offenders which in turn, has made it quite easy for trafficking syndicates to carry on their operations (Adeyinka et al., 2023).

2.1.3 Institutional Framework for Combating Human Trafficking

The system that deals with the issue of human trafficking involves an organized structure comprising international, regional, and national entities responsible for combating trafficking through prevention, prosecution, and protection (Rena & Singh, 2025). The international organizations that take central role in policy coordination, giving technical support to countries, collecting data, and capacity building include the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

In terms of institutional responses at the regional level, while varying, there seems to be increased coordination through supranational governance mechanisms. In Africa, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have developed policy measures such as the Ouagadougou Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, Particularly Women and Children and the ECOWAS Initial Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons (Kehinde, 2025). These systems promote the harmonization of anti-trafficking legislation, the sharing of cross-border intelligence, and the coordination of victim protection systems. Though, the implementation is still very uneven because of differences in the capacity of institutions, lack of funds, and varying levels of political commitment among member states.

The institution-based frameworks at the national level usually include institutions that are dedicated to anti-trafficking efforts, the police force, the immigration department, the judiciary, and social welfare institutions. For instance, in Nigeria, the institution-based framework includes the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), which acts as the coordinating body responsible for the investigation and prevention of trafficking (Darley &

Dolemeyer, 2020). The NAPTIP works in partnership with the Nigerian Police Force, the Nigerian Immigration Service, and civil societies on the implementation of the anti-human trafficking laws such as the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act of 2015. Despite the existing structures, however, there continue to be coordination issues, corruption, lack of resources, and low prosecutions (Kehinde, 2025).

Another important feature of the institutional system is the judiciary and prosecution system, which acts to hold traffickers accountable and provides legal recourse to victims. An effective judiciary relies on qualified prosecutors, procedures sensitive to the needs of victims, and solid evidence gathering (Darley & Dolemeyer, 2020). However, in many developing situations, the inability of the judicial system and lengthy court process undermine deterrent efforts and allow for traffickers to take advantage of any gaps in the system. As pointed out by Adeyinka et al. (2023), the key features that define an anti-trafficking regime include the establishment of specialized courts for handling trafficking cases.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations are key parts of the institutional environment. NGOs provide direct assistance services such as victim sheltering, counselling, legal assistance, and reintegration. They play the role of advocates as well through heightened awareness, checking compliance on the part of governments to their obligations, and aiding in data collection. Coordination among different organizations including state institutions and NGOs plays a key role when tackling the international nature of trafficking rings. However, the lack of coordination in institutions and the absence of partnerships tend to hinder the process.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study on human trafficking in Nigeria was conducted using the multi-theoretical perspective due to the fact that it is a complex and international issue. There are various socio-economic, structural, and global forces influencing human trafficking; therefore, there can never be one theory that can sufficiently explain all aspects of the issue. In this regard, the theories used in this research include Push and Pull Theory, Rational Choice Theory, Structural Violence Theory, and Migration Systems Theory.

2.2.1 Push and Pull Theory

Push-Pull Theory indicates migration and trafficking as a result of conflicting structural pressures existing in both places of origin and destinations. Push factors involve unfavourable socioeconomic and political conditions that compel people to migrate out of their homes, while pull factors refer to favourable conditions in other areas that motivate people to migrate (Duong et al., 2023). Within Nigeria, some key push factors that lead people to be vulnerable to trafficking include poverty, lack of job opportunities, insecurity, limited educational opportunities, and gender discrimination. On the other hand, the traffickers rely on the perception that better lives, jobs, and education exist overseas, and use these pull factors as a way of recruiting their victims.

Despite its ability and capacity in analysing vulnerabilities, the theory has received criticisms due to determinism, particularly because of its tendency to oversimplify migration decisions and inability to consider organized criminal gangs and institutional flaws that facilitate trafficking (Mills et al., 2018).

2.2.2 Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory suggests that people take actions which maximize their advantages and minimize their disadvantages as they are perceived. When applied to human trafficking, the theory interprets traffickers' behaviour as rational decision-making in a very profitable yet low-risk criminal business (Pajon & Walsh, 2018). Trafficking networks cleverly work by taking advantage of the lack of strong law enforcement, corruption, and open borders to lower their risks and make more profits. For the victims, migration choices may be a manifestation of constrained rationality, whereby people who face serious economic problems take to high-risk migration ventures because there are no other feasible choices available to them. However, critics argue that this perspective does not explain coercion, deception, and the constraints that significantly influence the victimization process related to trafficking.

2.2.3 Structural Violence Theory

According to Structural Violence Theory, as explained by Cheverko et al. (2020) evaluates human trafficking from the macro-level by highlighting the systemic inequalities underlying the social, economic, and political institutions. Structural violence entails the social arrangements that consistently put certain groups at a disadvantage, thereby preventing them from fulfilling their basic needs like security, education, and livelihood. In Nigeria, structural violence is evident through widespread poverty, gender inequality, and shortcomings in social protection measures, unemployment, and corrupt institutions. This creates situations where individuals, particularly women and children, are highly vulnerable to being exploited by traffickers. Despite anti-trafficking laws, the persistence of the problem reveals the role played by the existence of structural vulnerabilities.

2.2.4 Migration System Theory

According to Migration Systems Theory, human trafficking is viewed against the backdrop of the globalization of migration, whereby, transit, and receiving states are understood to be interrelated through their histories, economies, and politics. According to De Haas et al., (2019), migration systems are viewed as self-reinforcing processes in that previous migrations result into networks that support future migrations, including those that are irregular and trafficked. Nigeria exists in such a system where Nigeria is primarily a sending state of trafficked persons through the routes leading to Europe, the Middle East, and some North African countries. These factors are enabled by the existence of diaspora linkages, the demand for manpower in destination countries, and the existence of migration routes.

2.3 Legal and Policy Framework in Nigeria

There exists a multi-layered framework of law and policies that Nigeria has formulated for the purposes of preventing, suppressing, and punishing human trafficking, as well as protecting victims. The key instruments include the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, the Immigration Act, the Child Rights Act, as well as ECOWAS protocols. In total, all these instruments form the legal framework for prosecuting, preventing, protecting victims, and international cooperation.

2.3.1 Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act

The Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, commonly called the 2015 Act, is the main legislative tool that exists in Nigeria with regard to the fight against human trafficking. All aspects of human trafficking, including recruitment, transport, harbouring, and receiving of people for purposes of exploitation, are covered under this law, which imposes

serious punishment in form of long imprisonment or even life imprisonment (Onu & Kolawole, 2020). Another prominent feature of the Act includes the creation of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), whose mandate is to investigate cases of trafficking, prosecute those responsible, and provide rehabilitation and reintegration services to victims (Victor & Benjamin, 2025). Protection for the victims is ensured through shelter, protection for witnesses, and restitution. Despite being very thorough, there are implementation challenges such as few prosecutions, corruption, and lack of resources that limit the impact of the law's implementation.

2.3.2 Immigration Act

The Nigerian Immigration Act plays a crucial role in controlling cross-border movement and improving border controls as ways of curbing the networks of trafficking. The Act makes it a crime for individuals to commit acts such as facilitating illegal border crossing, committing passport fraud, and using forged travel documents (Haynes, 2023). The Act strengthens the powers of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) in detecting and preventing such acts from happening through borders. These include provisions for the handling of passenger information systems, visa monitoring, and documentation. However, despite these provisions, Nigeria's porous borders and limited surveillance capacity continue to undermine effective implementation, allowing traffickers to exploit regional mobility gaps.

2.3.3 Child Rights Act (2003)

The Child Rights Act (CRA) has a full legal structure that aims to protect persons below 18 years, and it is highly relevant to dealing with cases of child trafficking. The law bans activities such as employment, exploitation, kidnapping, and prostitution of children, but on the other hand, it ensures that children have their right to education, protection from any abuse, and welfare

(AjaNwachukwu, 2017). The Children's Rights Act is aligned with international standards such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and reiterates Nigeria's adherence to international human rights laws. Its main limitation is the inconsistent implementation across the country as some states have yet to domesticate the Act because of their culture and religion, particularly northern regions (Ohuruogu, 2025).

2.3.4 ECOWAS Protocols and Regional Frameworks

On the regional level, Nigeria is within the confines of ECOWAS legal instruments to combat human trafficking and irregular migration in West Africa. Key among them is ECOWAS Initial Plan of Action Against Trafficking in Persons (2002/2003) and its subsequent revisions that emphasize regional collaboration, intelligence exchange and victim protection and standardisation of anti-trafficking legislation (Bassey et al., 2024). ECOWAS has also begun facilitating trans-national cooperation among the six West African states by endorsing joint border patrols, developing shared law enforcement operations, and establishing a multi-state interdiction task-force (Yemisi, 2024). Such measures are based on the understanding that West African trafficking cannot be tackled by individual countries alone. But, due to scarce resources and varying levels of political will and law enforcement strength, this cooperation is underenforced.

2.4 Challenges in Combating Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Though, despite the enactment of legal and institutional mechanisms to prevent and combat human trafficking in Nigeria, the realization of the anti- trafficking initiatives has proven elusive because of many structural, institutional and socio-economic bottlenecks undermining prevention initiatives, limiting prosecution opportunities, and constraining victim protection and rehabilitation (Abiodun et al., 2021). Corruption, poor funding, weak judicial system, social Stigma, lack of inter-agency cooperation, low awareness of the general public and inadequate

rehabilitative mechanisms have been identified as some of the factors inhibiting the efficacy of the anti-trafficking initiatives in Nigeria.

2.4.1 Lack of Public Awareness

Lack of public knowledge about the realities and danger involved in human trafficking people is one of the reasons for its emergence in Nigeria. In Nigeria, In particular in rural areas, people are not aware of the methods used by traffickers to recruit, nor are they aware of the perils of irregular migration. Okoye et al. (2025) reported that traffickers have taken advantage of widespread ignorance by offering false promises of jobs, education, and a higher quality of life. A lack of public education campaigns, poor levels of access to information, make young people and those who are economically disadvantaged even more vulnerable. And, the normalization of migration within communities has played a role in destigmatizing risky migration routes, as some families push migrants to have migration experiences without knowledge of the risks of trafficking (Abiodun et al., 2021).

2.4.2 Weak Judicial Processes

The judicial system plays an important role in prosecuting the offenders and ensuring justice is served to victims. However, there are still flaws and constraints in the Nigerian judicial system that renders efforts towards trafficking useless. Delay in proceedings, lack of evidence collection, and failure to protect witnesses are some of the problems encountered during prosecution. According to Abado (2021), many trafficking cases involve lengthy legal battles that have the effect of discouraging victims from initiating legal actions. In some cases, traffickers use legal loopholes and shortcomings in the prosecution process to win acquittals or reduced sentences. In addition, many judicial officers haven't received sufficient level of training on jurisdictions of trafficked crimes, sensitive procedures related to trafficked victims and international trafficked

circumstances (Idemudia et al., 2021). This also hampers the standard of adjudication and the effectiveness of current response to trafficked offences.

2.4.3 Poor Funding and Resource Constraints

Lack of financial resources is also a serious problem that hampers antitrafficking in Nigeria. Agencies responsible for fight against trafficking suffer from poor financial and material resources that incapacitate them from effective investigations, rescue and rehabilitation services. Okoye et al. (2025) indicated that the operations of NAPTIP could be hampered due to lack of proper funding. Most of the anti-trafficking offices lack proper modern surveillance equipment, forensic tools and skilled personnel to help in the monitoring of the agencies. Furthermore, low pay and welfare support to law enforcers could make them more vulnerable to corruption. Constraints with regard to resources will also affect the setting up of shelters and counselling for victims of trafficking.

2.5 Empirical Review

A number of recent empirical analyses have focused on the causes manifestations dimensions and institutional reactions to the Nigerian human trafficking occurrence. There is broad consensus among these studies that Nigeria is one of the leading countries in Africa impacted by human trafficking as it has been both a destination, transit and source country. Many present studies analyse the causes of trafficking from an economic sociological criminological, migration and human rights perspective, providing a comprehensive view of the problem.

A research paper on sex trafficking in Edo State was conducted by Omoniyi (2023). The research looked into the causes as well as the reasons for its continuing prevalence among women and girls from Edo State by identifying factors such as; poverty unemployment illiteracy, family

influence and weak institutions as the main contributors. The study also found that many victims become victimized due to false hope of finding job opportunities and better life outside Nigeria.

Olayiwola (2024) analyzed the impact of changing family structure on human trafficking in Nigeria. The research highlighted the influence of precarious economic conditions, weak family support networks and social pressures on the encouragement of high-risk migration for young people. The research discussed the importance of linkages between trafficking to household survival strategies whereby communities inadvertently facilitate irregular migration in expectation of foreign remittances, and specified that women and children are traditionally more vulnerable owing to gender, gender inequality and limited economic prospects.

Uduji et al. (2019) evaluated Nigeria anti-trafficking policies and programmes. The study reviewed the effectiveness of government policies, institutions and structure in place to address trafficking issues. The study noted that Nigeria's anti-trafficking response was weak owing to declining quality of implementation processes, lack of funding, failure of authorities to take effective action against traffickers and corruption.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used for the research project titled “Tackling the Issue of Human Trafficking: Insights from Nigeria.” This chapter discusses the research methodology, geographical location of the research, target population, sample size and method of sampling, methods of data collection, data collection tool, validity and reliability of the data collection tool, data analysis method, and ethical issues involved in this research.

3.2 Research Design

The study adopted an explanatory sequential mixed-method research design. This approach involves the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data sequentially in two phases. The explanatory sequential mixed-method approach begins with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis to further explain, elaborate, and interpret the quantitative findings (Toyon, 2021).

The rationale behind using this type of design comes from the understanding that the problem under investigation demands a holistic approach. Through the quantitative approach, quantifiable data can be obtained on issues related to human trafficking in Nigeria. Although the qualitative aspect provides a deep understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and institutional facts of the subjects involved, the combination of both approaches increases the strength of the results gained, providing a deeper knowledge of the research issue studied (Othman et al. 2020).

Othman et al. (2020) noted that mixed-method designs enhance the strength of evidence for research conclusions through combining numerical trends and detailed participant perspectives. Some scholars indicate that explanatory sequential designs as an excellent choice

when researchers want to use qualitative findings to clarify quantitative results. Quantitative data for this research were gathered via a well-structured survey questionnaire, whereas qualitative data were collected through interviews with knowledgeable participants on human trafficking in Nigeria.

3.3 Population of the Study

The population of the study included people from communities selected in all six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, as well as organizational participants involved in anti-human trafficking activities. The participants included individuals working with agencies involved in combating trafficking, such as the Nigeria Police Force, the Ministry of Women Affairs, FIDA (International Federation of Women Lawyers), NAPTIP (National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons), HISBAH (Human and Institutional Capacity Building for Sustainable HIV/AIDS Services), and NHRC (National Human Rights Commission).

3.4 Sample Size

There were 385 respondents in the quantitative study. The sample size was determined by using an online sample size calculator at 5% margin of error. Of the 385 questionnaires that were distributed, only 368 responses were returned and were suitable for analysis. During the qualitative stage, the researcher held one-on-one interviews with a total of 5 people from different institutions and organizations in the anti-trafficking field in Nigeria. The purpose of these interviews was to gather expert opinions and institutional knowledge on the hurdles and measures to be taken in fighting human trafficking.

3.5 Sampling Technique

The research made use of multi-stage sampling method in identifying the respondents for the study. This method of sampling was in line with the researcher's purpose of selecting respondents systematically in different regions of Nigeria and at the same time achieving sufficient geographical representation. A state was chosen at random in each of Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The states chosen were Kano state (north-west), Adamawa state (north-east), Niger state (north-central), Edo state (south-south), Anambra state (south-east), and Oyo state (south-west). This method of selection was aimed at achieving a representative sample of the country's main regions.

Two local government areas were chosen at random from each state at this stage. They consisted of Kano Municipal and Dala in Kano State; Afijio and Ibadan North in Oyo State; Yola North and Gombi in Adamawa State; Awka South and Onitsha South in Anambra State; Egor and Oredo in Edo State; and Chanchaga and Suleja in Niger State.

Then, two communities were chosen in each local government area, making it a total of twenty-four communities in all six selected states. Questionnaires were randomly given to community members within the selected communities to have equal participation and a decrease in the bias of the respondents' selection.

3.6 Sources of Data Collection

This research made use of primary and secondary data gathering techniques for obtaining information relevant to the research. The use of more than one source of data improved the reliability and validity of the research through the use of first-hand and second-hand data on human trafficking in Nigeria.

The primary data were gathered through questionnaires and in-depth interviews conducted directly with the respondents. Specifically, the questionnaire was completed by the selected respondents in the selected areas to gather quantitative data concerning the causes, trends, problems, and institution-based responses to the trafficking of humans in Nigeria. Also, the researcher interviewed five key stakeholders and professionals engaged in anti-trafficking initiatives, among others, staff of relevant agencies and organizations, via face-to-face discussions to gather qualitative data. The interviews were extremely useful in providing a deep understanding and elaboration of the quantitative results obtained from the study.

Existing scholarly sources and documented materials complemented the study with help from secondary data. These cover textbooks, scholarly articles, official publications of the government, reports of international organizations like UNOCD, IOM, and NAPTIP, as well as online materials, policy papers, and earlier research in the field of human trafficking. Such secondary materials offered theoretical, empirical, and policy-related insights that enhance the research.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of Instrument

Validity is the degree to which a study tool actually measures the concept it is designed to measure whereas reliability is the ability of the tool to consistently produce the same or similar results under the same conditions (Surucu & Maslakci, 2020). Utilising both measures is important for the trustworthiness of the research. In order to guarantee the integrity of the research tools, the questionnaire and the interview guide were designed to directly address the study aims and the research questions. The tools were not only inspected by the research supervisor but also by other experts in social science research for their clarity, relevance, and suitability. To make sure the questionnaire was reliable; the language was kept clear and simple to minimize the possibility of

misunderstanding. A pilot test of the questionnaire was done to check its reliability, and changes were made to the instrument based on the results of the pilot before it was given to the final participants.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

Questionnaires were distributed to the people living in the selected communities from the six states. The questionnaires were distributed equally among the selected communities, with about sixteen copies in each community. The qualitative data collection involved conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with officials and staff from anti-trafficking organizations and institutions who were purposely selected. Each interview was about 20 minutes long and was audio-recorded after obtaining participants' consent. For analysis purposes, the interviews were transcribed word for word with Otter transcription software.

3.9 Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained through the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequency and percentage. The main emphasis of the analysis was on demographic factors and psychographic responses that were related to the research objectives. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data from the interviews. The participants' answers were categorized into themes and discussed in connection with the study's goals.

3.10 Ethical Consideration

The study was ethically conducted following the set principles. Participants were given due information on the objectives of the research and their consent was sought before their involvement. Measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of participants were adhered to during the whole research process. They assured the participants that their data would be used solely for academic purposes. Since human trafficking is a very sensitive topic, the researcher made sure to treat the participants with respect and protect them from any kind of psychological or emotional harm during the interviews and discussions.



CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and interpretation of data collected in the process of conducting this study, entitled “Tackling the Issue of Human Trafficking: Insights from Nigeria.” This chapter follows a format that is consistent with the objectives of the study. Data collected through questionnaires and interview are presented in tables showing frequencies and percentages, along with thematic analysis where necessary.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics and Response Rate of Respondents

4.2.1 Response Rate of Questionnaires

Table 1 indicates the response rate of respondents used for the study. A total of 385 copies of questionnaire were distributed among respondents in the selected areas in Nigeria. Out of the number distributed, 368 copies were returned to be used for analysis. This showed that 95.6% of the questionnaires was retrieved back while 4.4% was not returned. This high response rate indicates adequate participation of respondents which would provide a reliable basis for analysis of the study.

Table 1. Questionnaire Response Rate

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Copies of Questionnaire Distributed	385	100
Copies of Questionnaire Retrieved	368	95.6
Copies of Questionnaire Not Retrieved	17	4.4
Total	385	100

Source: Field Study, 2026

4.2.2 Demographic Data

The demographic data consisted basically respondents' personal information with focus on the age, marital status, academic qualifications, gender, as well as years of work experience.

Table 2: Gender of Respondents

Valid		Frequency	Percentage
	Female	198	53.8
	Male	170	46.2
	Total	368	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

The analysis of data obtained, shows that 198, representing 53.8% of the respondents, were males, implying that a good percentage of the respondents that are interested in human trafficking issues are females.

4.2.3 Age of Respondents

Table 3: Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	18-22	112	30.4
	23-27	91	24.8
	28-33	90	24.4
	33-and above	75	20.4
	Total	368	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

The results in Table 3, indicate that the majority of the respondents within the age of 18-22 in the selected communities were actually in more involved and affected by human trafficking in Nigeria as they are considered the ripe age for hustling and money oriented and wealth chasing driven.

4.2.4 Marital Status of Participants

Table 4: Marital Status of Respondents

Valid		Frequency	Percentage
	Single	196	52.4
	Married	96	26.2
	Divorced	34	9.2
	Widowed	42	12.2
	Total	368	100

Sources: Field survey, 2025

The analysis of data above reveals that 52.4%, which represents majority of respondents, were single, which means that the respondents were single individuals whose opinion about human trafficking matters as they are often the easy prey from these organized crime units and traffickers.

4.2.5 Academic Qualifications of Respondents

Table 5. Academic Qualifications of Respondents

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	SSCE/NECOL	121	31.5
	OND/NCE	82	20.7
	M.Sc/MA	85	21
	B.Sc/HND	12	23.5
	Ph.D	68	3.3
	Total	368	100

Source: Field survey, 2025

Table 5 indicates the academic qualification of the respondents in the study and the results show that 23.5% had a B.sc/HND degree certificate, while 31.5 % had an SSCE or NECO certificate.

4.3. Research Objective 1: To examine the root causes and factors that contribute to human trafficking in Nigeria

Table 6: Root Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Cause of Human Trafficking	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Poverty contributes to human trafficking	180 (48.9%)	140 (38.0%)	30 (8.2%)	18 (4.9%)	368
Unemployment increases trafficking vulnerability	190 (51.6%)	130 (35.3%)	28 (7.6%)	20 (5.5%)	368
Weak law enforcement encourages trafficking	175 (47.6%)	145 (39.4%)	31 (8.4%)	17 (4.6%)	368
Irregular migration contributes to trafficking	160 (43.5%)	150 (40.8%)	35 (9.5%)	23 (6.2%)	368
Corruption among officials promotes trafficking	170 (46.2%)	148 (40.2%)	30 (8.2%)	20 (5.4%)	368

Source: Field Study, 2026

Table 6 presents the root causes of human trafficking in Nigeria. The results indicate that poverty, unemployment, weak law enforcement, irregular migration and corruption were the key factors that affected human trafficking in Nigeria. Most respondents indicated that poverty and unemployment contribute to a high risk of trafficking due to difficult economic conditions and lack of opportunity. Respondents indicated that weak law enforcement also contribute to the high rate of trafficking in Nigeria as 47.6% and 39.4% strongly agreed and agreed respectively, that they were indications of weak law enforcements. In addition, the results indicate that irregular migration and efforts to improve living standards in another country are among the significant causes of human trafficking in Nigeria with 43.5% and 40.8% strongly agreed and agreed respectively. From the table above, both social and economic factors can be considered as the cause of human trafficking in Nigeria.

4.4. Research Objective 2: To explore the roles of governmental, non-governmental, and international organizations in the fight against human trafficking

Table 7: Roles of Institutions in Fight against Human Trafficking

Institutional Role	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Government agencies create awareness against human trafficking	160 (43.5%)	145 (39.4%)	40 (10.9%)	23 (6.2%)	368
NAPTIP and security agencies help in arresting traffickers	175 (47.6%)	140 (38.0%)	32 (8.7%)	21 (5.7%)	368
NGOs provide rehabilitation and support services for victims	185 (50.3%)	135 (36.7%)	28 (7.6%)	20 (5.4%)	368
International organizations support anti-trafficking efforts through funding and collaboration	170 (46.2%)	150 (40.8%)	30 (8.2%)	18 (4.8%)	368
Collaboration among organizations improves anti-trafficking efforts	180 (48.9%)	142 (38.6%)	27 (7.3%)	19 (5.2%)	368

Source: Field Study, 2026.

Table 7 presents the roles of institutions in the fight against human trafficking. The results showed that government agencies played a huge role in creating awareness about human trafficking as 43.5 % and 39.4% of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed. The results also indicated that 46.2% and 40.8% strongly agreed and agreed to the efforts made by international organizations in supporting anti trafficking efforts through collaboration and funding.

The results also reveal the critical roles played by NGO in victim rehabilitation, counselling, providing shelter and reintegrating victims. 50.3% and 36.7% strongly agreed and agreed respectively that NGOs have played a critical role in helping the victims of trafficking and have helped in creating awareness about trafficking. Conversely, respondents indicated the role played by international organizations in terms of financial aid, technical help, international cooperation, and help in victim repatriation and rehabilitation. Indeed, the results showed that

cooperation between governmental, nongovernmental, and international organizations is an important element in the fight against trafficking.

4.4. Research Objective 3; To propose new strategies for prevention, protection, and prosecution in tackling human trafficking in Nigeria

Thematic analysis of interview responses from the participants on the use of innovative methods to strengthen prevention, protection, and prosecution in combating human trafficking in Nigeria was conducted in this section. There were five participants interviewed for this research study. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed based on the themes generated during the interview process. In order to protect the identity of the participants, the following codes are assigned: P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5.

Table 8. Coding of Themes from Interview Responses

Code Identified	Emerging Theme
Poverty, unemployment, economic hardship, lack of opportunities	Poverty Reduction and Economic Empowerment
Awareness campaigns, education, media sensitization, community enlightenment	Public Awareness and Community Sensitization
Rehabilitation, counselling, reintegration, victim support services	Victim Protection and Rehabilitation
Law enforcement, prosecution, institutional collaboration, border security	Strengthening Law Enforcement and Institutional Collaboration

Source: Field Study, 2026

Theme One: Poverty Reduction and Economic Empowerment

A major theme from the responses generated from the interview questions is the need for poverty alleviation and empowerment programs as ways of preventing human trafficking. Poverty, unemployment, and lack of economic empowerment were identified by most of the respondents as some of the risk factors of vulnerability to trafficking.

Participant 2 (P2) stated:

“Many young people become victims because they lack jobs and financial support. If employment opportunities are created, trafficking will reduce.”

Similarly, Participant 4 (P4) explained:

“Poverty pushes many people to seek opportunities abroad without understanding the dangers involved.”

The responses from the participants suggested that sustainable employment programmes, vocational training, entrepreneurship support, and poverty alleviation initiatives are important strategies for reducing trafficking vulnerability in Nigeria.

Theme Two: Public Awareness and Community Sensitization

Public awareness and sensitization is another major theme that comes out clearly in the answers to the questions. The participants pointed out that ignorance and lack of awareness are among the factors that fuel human trafficking.

Participant (P1) stated:

“Many victims are deceived because they do not fully understand the dangers of trafficking and illegal migration.”

Participant 5 (P5) further noted:

“Government and NGOs should intensify awareness campaigns through schools, churches, social media, and local communities.”

The responses from the participants indicated that it is highly necessary to sensitize the people about human trafficking, which is crucial in preventing human trafficking.

Theme Three: Victim Protection and Rehabilitation.

The interview findings highlight the need for improved measures on the side of victim protection and rehabilitation initiatives. It was noted that trafficked victims experience emotional distress, social stigmatization, and financial challenges when reintegrated into society.

Participant 3 (P3) explained:

“Victims need counselling, rehabilitation, and support to help them recover and reintegrate into society.”

Similarly, Participant 2 (P2) observed:

“Without proper rehabilitation and empowerment, some victims may become vulnerable to trafficking again.”

The findings suggest that effective rehabilitation centers, counseling services, vocational training, and reintegration support programs are necessary for assisting trafficking survivors.

Theme Four: Strengthening Law Enforcement and Prosecution Mechanisms

Another theme that recurs in the answers of the interviewees is the need to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement agencies and prosecutorial measures. It was argued by the interviewees that weak law enforcement and corruption lead to the continuation of trafficking practices.

Participant 4 (P4) stated:

“Traffickers continue to operate because some enforcement agencies lack adequate resources and corruption affects prosecution.”

Participant 1 (P1) further recommended:

“There should be stricter punishment for traffickers and improved border monitoring systems.”

The responses indicate that strengthening anti-traffic laws, improving institutional capacities and ensuring effective prosecution of traffickers are essential in combating human trafficking networks.

4.6 Discussion of Findings

These results are discussed with regard to the three research questions that include (1) the root causes of human trafficking, the role of government and other institutions in combating this crime, and the methods and strategies needed for the prevention, protection, and prosecution in tackling human trafficking in Nigeria.

As regards the first research question, the results demonstrate that poverty, unemployment, inefficient law enforcement agencies, corruption, and irregular migration are the main causes of human trafficking in Nigeria. Majority of the respondents stated that because of their economic hardships, people become victims of the traffickers due to promise of improved living conditions in other countries. It is also evident that due to corruption and lack of proper enforcement techniques, the traffickers manage to escape from being caught and prosecuted. The results aligns with Adeyinka et al (2023). The study indicates that poverty, unemployment, and socio-economic vulnerability are the main factors contributing to human trafficking in Nigeria. These results are also in line with the position held by Ikyernum (2022), which stated that irregular migration and economic stress contribute to people's exposure to trafficking. Similar results can be found in Human Rights Watch (2019), which claims that corruption and institutional inefficiency affect efforts to counter trafficking.

Furthermore, the findings also show that ineffective governance systems and institutional inefficiencies contribute significantly to the operations of trafficking groups in Nigeria. The respondents were aware that poor border management, lack of sufficient funds to fight trafficking and inadequate coordination among different organizations make it easier for these groups to work effectively. Such a finding confirms the statement by Kehinde (2025) that trafficking is sustained by organized criminals through exploitation of weaknesses in the law enforcement agencies and

weak governance. This finding is supported by the statement of Okeshola and Adenugba (2018) that anti-trafficking programs in Nigeria are hindered by lack of implementation of policies and ineffective coordination among institutions.

The findings from the second research objective indicate that there are important functions played by governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations to combat human trafficking in Nigeria. The study highlights that government institutions like the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), Nigeria Police Force, and other immigration departments play an important role in fighting against human trafficking through awareness programs, arrests, prosecutions, and victim rescues. The participants also admitted that there are non-government organizations involved in providing rehabilitation, counselling, and reintegration services to trafficked individuals.

This finding is consistent with Victor and Benjamin (2025), who emphasized the role played by non-governmental organizations in advocating for awareness of human trafficking in both domestic and international contexts. The research results also reinforce the argument presented by Irele (2020) that NGOs play an essential role in filling institutional voids through counselling and reintegration efforts. Additionally, these results align with Onu and Kolawole (2020), who underscored the importance of international cooperation as an integral part of solving the issue of transnational trafficking of Nigerians to Europe and elsewhere. However, despite the initiatives made in this direction, the participants reported difficulties related to financial constraints, corruption, poor coordination, and institutional incapacity.

The third research objective highlights the four key themes that were established as critical in ensuring that prevention, protection, and prosecution measures in the fight against human

trafficking in Nigeria were improved. These include the themes of economic empowerment, poverty reduction, public awareness, victim protection and rehabilitation, and law enforcement

According to the findings, efforts towards poverty alleviation and economic empowerment must be considered as crucial measures for combating with the underlying issues related to human trafficking. Unemployment, poverty, and lack of economic prospects were mentioned by the interviewees as major factors that render many youths and women vulnerable to trafficking activities. As such, the study concludes that creating jobs and reducing poverty are key to tackling trafficking. This finding is in agreement with findings by Ogunniyi (2024), according to whom poverty and unemployment have been found to be the primary socio-economic factors contributing to human trafficking in Nigeria.

The research also reveals that public awareness and community sensitization are essential preventive measures in the struggle against human trafficking. The participants noted that lack of knowledge about the methods employed in trafficking is one of the factors contributing to the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria. This is to show that awareness campaigns carried out through schools, religious organizations, media channels, and community networks play a key role in making the vulnerable individuals aware of the dangers of trafficking and irregular migration. This supports the claims of Omotoso et al. (2022) that advocacy and enlightenment programs played an integral part in solving the issue of human trafficking.

In addition, the results indicate that there must be measures put in place to help victims of trafficking and reduce chances of their re-victimization. It emerged strongly from the discussions held by the respondents and interviewees that counselling, rehabilitating, healthcare, training, and reintegration of the rescued victims is critical. It is clear from the study results that a considerable percentage of rescued persons are psychologically traumatized, stigmatized, and economically

stressed after being rescued or repatriated. These findings align with Okon and Akpan (2021), who argued for the importance of psychosocial services to support the reintegration of trafficked victims.

Furthermore, the findings also reveal that effective improvements in the process of prosecution, as well as in removal of trafficking networks, can only be achieved through strengthening law enforcement and institutions working together. Among the difficulties mentioned by the participants are law enforcement problems and poor cooperation between institutions. As such various suggestions were proposed by respondents such as stricter adherence to anti-trafficking laws, better border control, better intelligence gathering, and greater coordination between government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and international organizations. This result aligns with Osuigwe (2017), who asserts that institutional deficiencies and corruption continue to hinder the implementation of anti-trafficking measures.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Human trafficking has been one of the most deeply rooted and severe transnational organized crimes, as well as a major human rights violation in Nigeria. Even with the various measures taken by the government, NGOs, and international bodies, the issue still causes significant socio-economic difficulties, security concerns, and humanitarian problems in the nation. The purpose of this research was to evaluate the causes and factors of human trafficking in Nigeria, to assess the involvement of governmental, non-governmental, and international institutions in fighting trafficking, and to recommend best ways of enhancing prevention, protection, and prosecution methods.

The study findings indicate that poverty, unemployment, corruption, weak law enforcement mechanisms, irregular migration and socio-economic inequalities are major factors sustaining human trafficking in Nigeria. The study finds that economic hardship and the desire for better living conditions abroad make many people, especially young people and women, vulnerable to traffickers. The results also reveal that the country's anti-trafficking efforts are still marred by weak institutional capacity, inadequate funding, poor agency coordination and corruption.

It was noted in the research that the government institutions like the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the Nigeria Police Force, and the immigration department are the main actors in public education, apprehension and legal proceedings against traffickers, border control, and victim rescue missions. Also, NGOs and international organizations play major roles in combating human trafficking through advocacy campaigns, rehabilitation programmes, victim reintegration, and funding support, technical assistance, and international

collaboration. Though, the results suggested that due to institutional flaws and the progressively clever trafficking networks changes, these interventions have not been successful enough.

The research also indicates the issue involves poverty alleviation and economic empowerment, raising public awareness and community sensitization, protection and rehabilitation of victims. Furthermore, strengthening law enforcement and institutional cooperation are key strategies necessary for tackling human trafficking quite effectively. Conclusively, there is the need for an approach to tackling human trafficking in Nigeria, which is multi-dimensional in nature and calls for collaboration among several groups. The existence of human trafficking in Nigeria may continue due to failure to adequately address the structural elements driving this menace.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings from the study, the following are the recommendations proposed:

- ✓ The government must implement sustainable development programs for poverty reduction and employment creation to get rid of the socio-economic vulnerability of the youths and women, the groups that are the first to fall under the control of traffickers.
- ✓ In addition, there must be allocation of funding for education, vocational training, entrepreneurship development, and skills acquisition programmes to provide the vulnerable people with empowerment and thereby help them resist migration that may be unsafe.
- ✓ Public awareness campaigns and community sensitization programmes should be expanded to use schools, religious institutions, media organizations, and local community leaders as avenues to inform people about the risks of human trafficking and irregular migration.
- ✓ The government and other stakeholders should increase the number of rehabilitation and reintegration Centre's where victims of human trafficking can receive counselling healthcare vocational training and even economic support in their reintegration into society.

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