

## THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL AGENCY FOR THE PROHIBITION OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS (NAPTIP) IN COMBATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Human trafficking in Nigeria persists and has become a grave humanitarian crisis, with individuals exploited for labour and sex work. Rooted in poverty, inequality, and corruption, it undermines human rights and social stability. Women, children, and migrants are especially vulnerable. Amidst this crisis, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) stands as a beacon of hope. Since its establishment in 2003, it has been at the forefront of combating trafficking through a comprehensive strategy. The institution's efforts encompass prevention, protection, prosecution, and partnership. Through extensive awareness campaigns and community engagement, it educates the public, empowering individuals to recognize and report trafficking. The agency provides vital support to victims, offering shelter, legal aid, healthcare, and rehabilitation services. NAPTIP collaborates closely with law enforcement to apprehend traffickers and advocates for stronger legislation. Furthermore, it fosters alliances with both domestic and international stakeholders to amplify its impact. Despite challenges, NAPTIP's unwavering commitment remains pivotal in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria, underscoring the imperative of collective action to eradicate this scourge. The paper adopted the institutional theory. Emphasis is made on the need for the prevention of human trafficking through education and awareness, enhanced collaboration and coordination with relevant stakeholders, and the establishment of a unified data-sharing mechanism.*

**Keywords:** Human trafficking, Human Security, Human Rights, NAPTIP, Migration

### Introduction

Human trafficking is an age-long phenomenon that existed where individuals were used as slaves and transported from one location to another. Though slavery is believed to be a no longer existing phenomenon because of its worldwide abolishment, unfortunately, human trafficking in the contemporary era is believed to be a modern-day form of slavery involving the illegal trade of people for exploitation or commercial gain. According to the Anti-trafficking Alliance (2017), it is purported to be a \$150 billion global industry. Trafficking in human beings is not new. No country can claim that its borders are not affected in some way or the other by trafficking. This pervasive crime affects hundreds of thousands of victims worldwide, with a significant portion being children, predominantly females.

These individuals are forcibly transported from their homelands, whether within their own country or across national boundaries, and subject to exploitation for maximum economic gains. Often, they are coerced into engaging in low-paying jobs like domestic servitude, street vending, begging, prostituting, or forced into various forms of servitude that mirror the

abhorrent conditions of slavery. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2020), human trafficking is a pervasive violation of human rights that affects millions of individuals worldwide. It entails the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons through force, fraud, or coercion for exploitation. This heinous crime encompasses various forms of exploitation, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, and organ trafficking. The UNODC (2020) estimates that around 25 million people are victims of human trafficking globally, with women and children being particularly vulnerable. According to the Anti-trafficking Alliance Report Index (2017), modern-day slavery is most widespread in Africa, and unfortunately, Nigeria has gained notoriety as one of the prominent African nations involved in human trafficking, both internally and across borders. The trafficking of individuals ranks as the third most significant criminal activity, following economic fraud and drug trade. Nigeria serves as a country of origin, transit, and destination for human trafficking. Internal trafficking within Nigeria is a concerning issue that cannot be overlooked.

Trafficked Nigerians are exploited in various destinations, including neighbouring West African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Gabon, and Guinea. Furthermore, European countries like Italy, Belgium, Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom serve as destinations. Additionally, North African countries such as Libya, Algeria, and Morocco, as well as Middle Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, are also identified as areas where Nigerian victims are trafficked (Anti-trafficking Alliance Report Index, 2017). Nigeria, like many other countries, is confronted with the challenges posed by human trafficking. The country serves as a source, transit, and destination country for trafficking victims, experiencing a range of exploitative practices within its borders. Forced labour, sexual exploitation, and trafficking for rituals are prevalent forms of human trafficking in Nigeria (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2020). To address this issue, Nigeria was one of the first countries in Africa to take decisive measures against trafficking in persons. It was the first to enact anti-trafficking legislation in 2003 and also established a specialized law enforcement, anti-trafficking agency, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) in 2003, designating it as the primary agency responsible for combating human trafficking in the country.

NAPTIP has been at the forefront of efforts to combat human trafficking within Nigeria. Recognizing the transnational nature of the crime, NAPTIP has actively engaged in collaborations with international organizations, governments, and nongovernmental organizations to strengthen its effectiveness and broaden its impact. These collaborative endeavours are aimed at enhancing prevention, prosecution, protection, and partnership-building initiatives, as well as addressing the root causes and underlying factors that contribute to human trafficking.

NAPTIP has implemented various initiatives to counter human trafficking, including legislative and policy reforms, prevention campaigns, victim identification, and assistance programs, investigation and prosecution of traffickers, and capacity-building and training efforts. NAPTIP actively sought partnerships with international entities like the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to harness collective expertise, resources, and support in the fight against human trafficking. According to the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) (2021), "Nigeria was the first country on the continent to record successful anti-trafficking prosecutions, with convictions to date." Despite the increasing attention and collaborative efforts directed toward combating human trafficking, challenges persist. These challenges range from the complexities of transnational cooperation, limited

resources, and the evolving nature of the crime itself. Therefore, it becomes essential to evaluate the effectiveness of NAPTIP in combating human trafficking in Nigeria.

## Conceptual Review

### *Human Trafficking*

Human trafficking is a relatively recent term and is used to describe the act of the acquisition or transportation of a person away from the community in which they live through the use of violence, coercion, or deception to exploit them. In the case of children, their vulnerability is a factor, thus coercion does not have to be present. The Palermo Protocol of the United Nations (2013:9) defines human trafficking as:

The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons using threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, the abuse of power, of a position of vulnerability, or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for exploitation. Exploitation shall include at a minimum the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude, or the renewal of organs.

From the above definition trafficking has three elements: the act (recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, receipt of persons - international or internal) and the means (threat of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, giving payments or benefits), and the purpose (exploitation, which includes prostitution of others, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery or practices similar to slavery or removal of organs, labour exploitation/child abuse and other types of exploitation.). Although the definition is the internationally accepted definition of human trafficking, the individual elements, such as sexual exploitation, forced labour, and slavery-like practice, are not further defined in the Protocol, and signatory states are obligated to further define these terms under their domestic legislation (Perez and Fernanda, 2009).

The Palermo Protocol represents a broad international consensus on the definition of human trafficking; however, there is controversy surrounding some of its elements. The definition is broad and unclear; therefore, it leaves interpretation to each State and generates various debates surrounding it. The International Labour Organization (ILO) notes that for example, there has been a debate as to whether trafficking must involve some movement of the trafficked victims either within or across national borders together with the process of recruitment, or whether the focus should be only on the exploitation that occurs at the end (ILO, 2009). A further issue has been whether trafficking for exploitation necessarily involved coercion. More so, some states have adopted more expansive definitions and there is vigorous debate in the literature about what constitutes trafficking. For example, Israel includes trafficking for surrogacy and the United States includes any commercial sex act of a minor. Literature on human trafficking is especially critical of scholars' imprecision in defining the concept (Patterson and Zhuo 2018; Weitzer 2014). In particular, tensions arise in how the following concepts are defined: labour trafficking versus economic migration; migrant trafficking versus smuggling/migration; and sex trafficking versus sex work.

Trafficking is often understood primarily as sex work but also occurs for a range of exploitative activities including domestic servitude, forced labour, forced begging, or criminal activities such as pick-pocketing and the exploitation of children for benefit or fraud

(Akor, 2011). Many have been sent to an untimely death in the course of crossing trans-borders, compulsory and dehumanizing labour, or forced sex in the trafficking journey. Human trafficking has become a cankerworm in the third-world countries of Africa and Nigeria in particular. Many youths comprising of girls, women, and young men are used as commercial sex hawkers, domestic servants, and mining labourers in the case of young men for little or no pay and against their will in most cases.

The concept of trafficking is defined by The Trafficking in Persons Law Enforcement and Administration Act (2003), as all and attempted acts involved in the recruitment, transportation within or across a nation's borders, purchases, sales, transfer, receipt, or harbouring of a person involving the use of deception, coercion or debt bondage to place or hold the persons, whether for or not involuntary servitude (domestic, sexual or reproductive) in forced or bonded labour, or in slavery-like conditions. In the same vein, human trafficking according to Article 3(a) of the United Nations Palermo Protocol is conceptualized as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, and receipt of persons, using threat, use of force, or other forms of coercion. It also entails the use of abduction, fraud, deception, and the abuse of power in giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for exploitation (United Nations Palermo Protocol, 2000). According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (nd):

Human trafficking involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons using threats, use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or vulnerability for exploitation.

Also, UNESCO (2006) on human trafficking defined it to be a process that involves the exploitation of a vulnerable person through recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons using threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud, deception and abuse of power. Buttressing the UN's definition, Newton (2008) observes that human trafficking has been employed to address an avalanche of crimes and human rights abuses in connection with the recruitment, movement, and selling of people into exploitative conditions (Newton, 2008). For Olatunde et al (2008) in their handbook *“Access to Justice for Trafficked Persons in Nigeria”*, human trafficking was defined as a serious form of organized crime that involves the exploitation of people. According to Akor (2011), the history of human trafficking including that of the present-day trafficking of women, cannot be completely divorced from the phenomenon of slavery. This is because both involve the acquisition and transportation of humans across local, national, and international borders for servitude, with or without the consent of the trafficked person(s). According to Shelley (2010), human trafficking is thought to be one of the fastest-growing activities of transnational criminal organizations. Human trafficking is condemned as a violation of human rights by international conventions.

### ***Human Security***

Although, there are many definitions attributed to human security that vary in various disciplines. The origin of the concept of human security can be traced to the publication of the Human Development Report of 1994 issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994). It represents a paradigm shift in thinking about security which has traditionally centred on the security of the state instead of the people. The reason for this, according to the report, is that the world will never be secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs. It stressed that the two fronts in the battle for peace are 'freedom from fear' and 'freedom from want' which the report considered to be the

core of the human security agenda (UN Human Development Report, 1994). More so, human security is often seen as having a variety of dimensions:

- i. Economic security - That includes an assured basic income
- ii. Food security - It includes physical and economic access to basic food.
- iii. Health security -This includes protection from disease and unhealthy lifestyles.
- iv. Environmental security - This involves protection from human-induced environmental degradation.
- v. Personal security - It is about protection from all forms of physical violence.
- vi. Community security - It talks about protection for traditional identities and values.
- vii. Political security - It is about the existence of rights and freedoms to protect people from tyranny or government abuse.

Beebe and Kaldor (2010:5) put it succinctly when they stated that it is about the security of citizens not the security of the state. Beebe and Kaldor pointed out, that human security is about the protection of people more than the security of the states. Human and state security should be - and often are - the same thing. But states do not automatically mean secure people. Protecting the citizens from foreign attacks may be necessary for the security of the individuals, but it is certainly not sufficient. Indeed, during the last 100 years, more people have been killed by their governments than by foreign armies.

Human security is a multidimensional concept that encompasses the protection and well-being of individuals and communities. It recognizes that security extends beyond traditional military concerns and encompasses a range of factors that affect the daily lives of the people. Human security emphasizes the protection of individuals from various threats, including economic deprivation, political repression, social exclusion, environmental hazards, and violent conflict. Human security seeks to promote and safeguard the fundamental rights, dignity, and livelihoods of all individuals. According to UNDP (1994), "the concept of human security involves protecting vital freedoms, as well as people's lives, livelihoods, and dignity. It means shielding people from critical and pervasive threats and situations and building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity." According to Sen and Östergren (2010), human security refers to the protection and empowerment of individuals and communities against various threats that undermine their survival, livelihoods, and dignity. It encompasses a broad range of interrelated dimensions, including economic, political, social, health, and environmental aspects, and emphasizes the importance of people-centred approaches in addressing these challenges.

All proponents of human security agree that its primary goal is the protection of individuals. However, there are differences about precisely what threats individuals should be protected from. Proponents of the 'narrow' concept of human security focus on violent threats to individuals or, as former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan put it, "the protection of communities and individuals from internal violence". Proponents of the broad concept of human security argue that the threat agenda should include hunger, disease, and natural disasters because and natural disasters because they kill far more people than war, genocide, and terrorism combined. Human security policy they argue should protect people from these threats as well as from violence. In its broadest agenda, the human security agenda also encompasses economic security and threats to human dignity. Put differently, the broadest formulation stresses what has been called 'freedom from want' and freedom from fear' respectively.

***Human Rights***

Even though the origin of human rights is ancient, the international concern with human rights may be said to be of comparatively recent origin. The United Nations Charter marks the advent of systematic human rights protection within the International system. The idea of human rights is as old as humanity, its systematic proclamation and declaration are more recent (Renaissance Law College, nd). Human rights were defined by Donnelly (2013) who also referred to it as “the rights of man”, as “literally the rights that one has because one is human.” As pointed out by Bantekas and Oette (2016) a lot of people and groups loosely use human rights to mean rights available to every person because they are human. As loosely as that understanding might be, it reflects on a basic level, the essence of the two words that came together to form the term. Human refers to everyone on earth irrespective of their age, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, orientation, sex, or creed. Rights refer to privileges that one compulsorily deserves irrespective of his or her age, ethnicity, nationality, ideology, orientation, sex, or creed. Rights are usually legally enforceable in character and application. Human rights are therefore privileges and opportunities which a person is entitled to by the simple virtue of the fact that he is a human being.

However, the definition of Human Rights is more technical. Taking the meaning of human rights for granted, or simply referring to formulas denoting rights that we have by being human, would ignore the controversy surrounding their foundations and validity (Bantekas and Oette, 2016). According to the United Nations (nd), ‘human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.’ These rights include “the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education... and everyone is entitled to access to these rights, without discrimination.”

Article 4 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights states, "Human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right." Foster (2006) views human rights have been viewed from three main categories, namely: Civil and political rights, which protect people from the infringements of governments, organizations, or other people; Socioeconomic and cultural rights, which include the right to education, housing, and satisfactory living conditions; and Solidarity rights, which recognizes the importance of equality and non-discrimination.

Black Law Dictionary categorised human rights into two, namely - entitlements based on specific values or principles; and legally enforceable entitlements and freedoms. The underlying notion behind it is that it is necessarily available to a person because he or she is a human being. However, it is not every legal right that applies from the perspective of human rights. A legal right is a right created or recognized by law. Its breach is usually remediable by monetary damages. It is also a right historically recognized by common law courts and so would include equitable rights. Legal rights can further be described as the capacity to assert a legally recognized claim against one with a correlative duty to act (Black Law Dictionary, nd). These rights are not only enjoyed by human beings, but by corporate bodies and even animals. Human rights can be an integral part of legal rights and legal rights go far beyond human rights and encompass other units of rights.

Universally, many recognize human rights as evidently a typically integral part of international relations (Donnelly, 2013:24). It is believed that the first steps taken to ensure and preserve human rights were witnessed at the end of the Second World War. However, there were signs of the preservation of human rights based on international relations. Examples would include the recognition of the religious rights of minority Christians, which

led to the end of an over thirty-year war and the peace of Westphalia in 1648. Reference is also made to the Slave Trade Act of 1807, which brought an end to the slave trade as it was known then. Other angles of history that refer to the address of issues of human rights on an international level include, The Cyrus Cylinder where Cyrus the Great freed slaves and gave people the freedom to adhere to any religion they desired around 539 BC; the Magna Carta Libertatum (Great Charter of Freedoms) which was the charter of rights 1215. The Magna Carta was an instrument of peace (drafted by the Archbishop of Canterbury) between King John I of England and the rebel barons. It upheld the rights of churches, protected the barons from illegal imprisonment, ensured access to swift justice, and limited feudal payments to the Crown. It will also be pertinent to refer to the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 1789, Article 1 of which says that “men are born and remain free and equal in rights”.

The term ‘human rights’ which has been used since World War II, gained importance in contemporary debates and became a universal phenomenon. After the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on December 10, 1948, by the United Nations, it was seen by many as a sign of optimism for the better protection, promotion, and enforcement of human rights. However, 50 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it has been reported that human rights abuses have not decreased. The world is filled with examples of violations of basic rights such as censorship, discrimination, political imprisonment, torture, slavery, disappearances, genocide, extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and killings, poverty, etc. The rights of women and children are also ignored in many different ways.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper adopts the institutional theory. Institutional theory as described by Scot (2004), delves into the fundamental and enduring elements of social structure. It explores the mechanisms through which structures such as schemes, rules, norms, and routines are established as influential principles governing social behaviour. The various components of institutional theory shed light on the creation, diffusion, adoption, and adaptation processes of these elements across different contexts and periods. Additionally, they elucidate the factors contributing to their eventual decline and disuse. To provide a clearer understanding, Kraft and Furlong (2007) frame institutional theory as an approach to "policy-making that emphasizes the formal and legal dimensions of government structures."

One of the major scholars associated with the institutional theory is sociologist Meyer, John W. Meyer, along with Brian Rowan. They are known for their influential work on the institutionalization of organizations and the role of institutions in shaping behaviour and practices. Meyer and Rowan (1977) developed the concept of "institutionalized organizations" and emphasized the importance of institutional environments in structuring and guiding organizations' behaviour. Their work contributed significantly to the understanding of how organizations conform to and adopt institutionalized practices and norms. Other notable scholars who have made significant contributions to Institutional Theory include Paul DiMaggio, Walter Powell, and Lynne Zucker. Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell's work (1983) on "institutional isomorphism" has been influential in explaining the similarities and convergence of organizational structures and practices within institutional fields. Zucker (1977) has contributed to the study of institutional logic and the interplay between institutions and social networks.

Scott (1995) highlights that organizations are compelled to adhere to the rules and belief systems that exist in their environment to ensure their survival. This is because institutional isomorphism, whether in terms of structural or procedural aspects, grants organizations

legitimacy. Drawing upon the definitions and evaluations of institutional theory by Kraft and Furlong (2007) and Scott (1995), it can be inferred that NAPTIP, as a formal government structure, must align itself with its environment's prevalent rules and belief systems. By doing so, NAPTIP can attain legitimacy through institutional isomorphism, which involves conforming to both the structural and procedural dimensions of the prevailing institutional framework.

By applying Institutional Theory to this context, we can analyse how formal and informal institutional factors influence the behaviour, practices, and effectiveness of NAPTIP. Here is an application of Institutional Theory to NAPTIP efforts in combating human trafficking in Nigeria:

- i. **Institutional Pressures and Legitimacy:** 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.
- ii. **Normative Structures and Practices:** 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.
- iii. **Institutional Logics and Field Configurations:** Institutional Theory recognizes that different institutional logics may coexist within a field, leading to tensions and conflicting expectations. NAPTIP operates at the intersection of multiple institutional logics, including law enforcement, victim support, human rights, and international collaboration. These logics may have distinct goals, values, and practices. NAPTIP's ability to navigate and reconcile these logics affects its approach to investigations, victim support, prevention, and collaboration with international partners. Examining the interplay of these institutional logics helps assess the challenges and opportunities faced by NAPTIP and its collaborators.
- iv. **Isomorphic Pressures and Collaboration:** NAPTIP's collaborations with international partners, such as United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations, and inter-governmental organizations, may be influenced by mimetic isomorphism. NAPTIP's adoption of collaborative practices and structures similar to those of its partners can be driven by the desire to gain legitimacy, learn from successful models, and conform to prevailing institutional practices in the global fight against human trafficking.

From a specific perspective, NAPTIP plays a vital role in combating human trafficking in Nigeria. NAPTIP's significance stems from its mandate, functions, and efforts to address various aspects of human trafficking.

### Causes of Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Human trafficking in Nigeria is a complex issue with various interconnected causes. Some of the primary factors contributing to human trafficking in Nigeria include:



**Poverty:** No one can say with exactitude when human trafficking began, but the phenomenon can be said to have gained prominence in the early 1990s when drug trafficking and advanced fee fraud (419) became commonplace. Muhammed (2004) opined that human trafficking particularly women, began as a simple strategy adopted by families desperate for a reprieve from biting economic hardships after the oil glut that was misused by Nigerian leaders between the 80s and 90s. Many factors such as poverty, level of ignorance, and family size among other things account for why human trafficking became prevalent, particularly as Mohammed (2004) citing the World Bank (1995) reported that over 45 (now about 70) percent of the country's population lives below the poverty line; the situation has become worse in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This makes most families vulnerable to human trafficking. Traffickers exploit their vulnerabilities, coercing them into situations of forced labor, sexual exploitation, or domestic servitude. More so, the cyclical nature of poverty exacerbates the issue, creating a vicious cycle that entraps vulnerable populations.

**Unemployment:** Unemployment serves as a significant driver of human trafficking in Nigeria, exacerbating the vulnerability of individuals to exploitation and manipulation by traffickers. With an unemployment rate that has consistently hovered around double digits in recent years, Nigeria grapples with a pervasive lack of job opportunities, particularly among its youth population. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the youth unemployment rate stood at 42.5% in the second quarter of 2020, highlighting the dire economic circumstances faced by many young Nigerians (NBS, 2020). This high level of unemployment creates a fertile ground for traffickers to prey upon the desperation of individuals seeking livelihoods and economic stability.

In the absence of legitimate employment prospects, many young Nigerians are lured by the promise of better opportunities abroad, making them vulnerable to the false promises of traffickers. Traffickers exploit this vulnerability by offering the prospect of lucrative jobs or educational opportunities in other countries, enticing their victims with the hope of escaping poverty and securing a brighter future. However, upon arrival at their destination, many find themselves ensnared in exploitative situations, forced into labor, prostitution, or other forms of servitude against their will. Also, the lack of formal employment opportunities contributes to the informal economy's expansion, where labor standards are often lax, and exploitation is rampant. Desperate individuals may resort to informal sector jobs characterized by low wages, long hours, and hazardous working conditions, making them susceptible to trafficking schemes promising higher pay and better working conditions. The informal nature of these sectors also makes it easier for traffickers to operate with impunity, as oversight and regulation are minimal.

**Lack of Education:** Apart from poverty, many of the victims of human trafficking abroad particularly women and girls are ignorant of the fate that awaits them in their country of destination. The situation is such that many of the women and girls had little or no education hence they are easily carried away by the picture of good lives painted by their sponsors. Some scholars have also blamed trafficking on family size. Particularly African and Nigerians with a large concentration of polygamous families for egalitarian settlements in the villages and slums where means of livelihood became cumbersome, hence adolescents strive to find solace outside the home, thereby making them vulnerable to the tactics of traffickers (Rotimi, 2001). Researchers have found that inadequate legal knowledge and low levels of literacy tend to increase the vulnerability of individuals to sex trafficking and have also reduced the knowledge of individuals benefiting from measures to prevent trafficking.

**Demand for Cheap Labour and Sexual Services:** The demand for cheap labor and sexual services significantly contributes to the prevalence of human trafficking in Nigeria,

perpetuating a cycle of exploitation and vulnerability. In a country marked by economic disparities and widespread poverty, there exists a pervasive demand for low-cost labour in various sectors such as agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and domestic work (Okonofua et al., 2019). This demand creates opportunities for traffickers to exploit individuals seeking employment opportunities, particularly those from impoverished rural areas with limited access to formal employment channels. Traffickers capitalize on the promise of lucrative jobs and exploit the desperation of vulnerable individuals, coercing them into situations of forced labor where they are subjected to exploitation, abuse, and inhumane working conditions.

Nigeria's thriving sex industry, both domestically and internationally, fuels the demand for sexual services and drives the trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation (Nwabueze and Nwokeoma, 2018). The demand for cheap and easily exploitable labor in the sex trade incentivizes traffickers to recruit and transport victims, often through deception, coercion, or force, to meet the insatiable demand for sexual services. Women and girls, particularly those from marginalized communities and vulnerable backgrounds, are disproportionately affected by this demand, with many coerced into prostitution or subjected to sexual slavery. Furthermore, Nigeria's position as a source, transit, and destination country for human trafficking exacerbates the demand for cheap labor and sexual services both domestically and internationally (International Organization for Migration, 2020).

**Globalization:** Though human trafficking is not a recent situation, the global experience, consolidation, and complexity of trafficking networks and the rapid increase of trafficked women and children each year are the most recent (Troshynski and Blank:2008). According to Lansink (2004:2), society has become disorientated due to the acceptance of globalization by many nations, leading to the disappearance of traditional resources. The wealth inequalities caused by globalization due to the economy between states have left a wide range of rich and poor communities within a country (UNHCHR 1999:4). These global restructuring developments have created a conducive environment to trafficking most especially sex trafficking and it has given rise to tourism, one of the avenues traffickers uses to move their victims. Some tourist attraction includes entertainment from women such as the strip clubs located in various countries.

### **Impact of Human Trafficking in Nigeria**

The impact of human trafficking in Nigeria or anywhere in the world cannot be underestimated as it affects individuals, families, communities, and the country as a whole in various ways. Some of the impacts include:

**Individual Trauma:** The impact of human trafficking in Nigeria extends far beyond the immediate physical and psychological harm inflicted upon victims, often leaving lasting scars of individual trauma. Survivors of trafficking experience severe and multifaceted trauma resulting from the exploitation, abuse, and degradation they endure during their ordeal. Many trafficked individuals face physical violence, sexual assault, forced labor, and psychological manipulation, which can have profound and long-lasting effects on their mental and emotional well-being (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The trauma experienced by trafficked individuals often manifests in various ways, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, and other mental health disorders. The psychological impact of trafficking can be debilitating, affecting survivors' ability to trust others, form healthy relationships, and reintegrate into society (International Organization for Migration, 2020). Additionally, the stigma and shame associated with trafficking further compound survivors' trauma, leading to feelings of isolation, self-blame, and low self-worth.

**Loss of Human Capital:** Human trafficking deprives Nigeria of valuable human resources by exploiting and exploiting its citizens, particularly its youth, who are often targeted by traffickers. As a result, the loss of human capital occurs at both the individual and societal levels, undermining Nigeria's socioeconomic development and impeding progress towards achieving its full potential (ILO, 2017). At the individual level, trafficked individuals often endure physical and psychological trauma, hindering their ability to realize their full potential and contribute meaningfully to society. Many survivors of trafficking face barriers to education, employment, and social integration due to the stigma and trauma associated with their exploitation (ILO, 2017). As a result, they may struggle to access opportunities for personal and professional growth, perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization. At the societal level, human trafficking deprives the country of high-skilled manpower needed for rapid national development. It acts as a brain drain.

**Bad International Image:** Bad international image ranks as one of the most palpable effects of human trafficking. Owing to the high degree and alarming rate of human trafficking engaged by Nigerians within and across the globe, there have been unprintable reports that portray Nigerian reputation in a bad light. It has created an erroneous impression that the country cannot provide for its citizens, especially in the area of employment and social welfare, hence the exodus of her able-bodied youths to foreign countries.

With the increase of young prostitutes of Nigerian origin are allegedly often spotted in sex parlours and streets of some European countries (Italy, Holland, and Belgium, etc) soliciting for male clients, Nigerians are branded promiscuous and people of low morals that can do anything to earn a living, even sleeping with dogs and monkeys as a result, our people are held in disdain and treated like animals. Such reports tend to lower the image of the country before the international community and portray it in a bad light. This makes every Nigerian a suspect wherever he or she goes. Consequently, we are faced with harsh immigration laws and in some cases, the most sophisticated security gadgets are used in screening us at different international borders and embassies. So many times visa is denied to Nigerians (Igwebuike, 2018).

**Inhuman Treatment:** Human trafficking exposes some Nigerian citizens to all forms of inhuman treatment in foreign countries. These include physical assault, rape, detention, and in some extreme cases execution. Many Nigerians are also known to be languishing in prisons in some countries of the world due to the misadventures associated with human trafficking. Trafficking victims also experience other forms of psychological and physical abuse. Yukoshko (2009) reports that victims are more likely to experience fear, guilt, a sense of betrayal, lack of trust, suspicion, a sense of apathy, shame, withdrawal, resignation to fate, hopelessness, extreme form of submissiveness, maladaptation, and a sense of loss of personal autonomy; initiative and integrity. The report also adds that victims tend to turn to drugs, as well as being much more likely to inflict self-injury or even commit suicide. Yet also, victims stand the risk of being arrested, facing detention, prosecution, and deportation. The fastest-growing prisons in Italy, France, Spain, the Netherlands, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and South Africa are the ones for the immigrants trafficked for sexual exploitation (UNHCR, 2000) most probably from Nigeria.

**Health Risks:** Human trafficking in Nigeria poses significant health risks to trafficked individuals, exacerbating vulnerabilities and exposing them to a range of physical and psychological health consequences. Trafficked persons often endure harsh and dehumanizing conditions, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, and physical abuse, which can have profound implications for their health and well-being (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The lack of access to healthcare and basic hygiene facilities further

compounds these risks, leaving trafficked individuals vulnerable to a myriad of health problems.

One of the primary health risks associated with human trafficking in Nigeria is the spread of infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and tuberculosis. Trafficked individuals, particularly those subjected to sexual exploitation, are at heightened risk of contracting these diseases due to unprotected sex, multiple partners, and limited access to healthcare services (Nwabueze and Nwokeoma, 2018).

### **The Role of NAPTIP in Preventing Human Trafficking in Nigeria**

NAPTIP plays a crucial role in preventing human trafficking in Nigeria through various strategies and interventions. Established in 2003 under the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act, NAPTIP has been at the forefront of combating human trafficking in the country. The multifaceted role of NAPTIP in preventing human trafficking in Nigeria is listed below.

**The Legislative Framework:** The legislative framework surrounding human trafficking in Nigeria, particularly the Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act of 2003, forms a cornerstone in the efforts to combat this heinous crime. Under this legislation, all forms of human trafficking are criminalized, and stringent penalties are prescribed for perpetrators. The enactment of this law signifies the commitment of the Nigerian government to address the scourge of human trafficking and protect the rights of its citizens. NAPTIP, as the primary agency tasked with enforcing this legislation, has leveraged its provisions to prevent human trafficking through various strategies.

Firstly, NAPTIP utilizes the legal framework to conduct thorough investigations into suspected cases of human trafficking. The agency collaborates closely with law enforcement agencies to gather evidence, apprehend perpetrators, and initiate legal proceedings against them. By rigorously enforcing the anti-trafficking laws, NAPTIP sends a clear message that human trafficking will not be tolerated in Nigeria, thereby deterring potential traffickers from engaging in such criminal activities (Adekoya, 2018). Secondly, NAPTIP's use of the legislative framework extends to its efforts in prosecuting offenders. The agency works diligently to ensure that traffickers are brought to justice and held accountable for their crimes. Through the prosecution of traffickers, NAPTIP not only seeks justice for victims but also disrupts trafficking networks and dismantles the infrastructure that enables such exploitation to thrive. This serves as a deterrent to other would-be traffickers, contributing to the overall prevention of human trafficking in Nigeria (NAPTIP Act, 2015).

**Law Enforcement and Prosecution:** 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.

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 (Okoye, 2019).

**NAPTIP's Victim Support and Rehabilitation:** NAPTIP's victim support and rehabilitation efforts are central to its mission in combating human trafficking in Nigeria. Recognizing the severe trauma and vulnerabilities experienced by trafficking victims, the agency provides comprehensive support services aimed at assisting survivors in their recovery and reintegration into society. Through the establishment of shelters, counseling programs, vocational training initiatives, and collaboration with other stakeholders, NAPTIP endeavours to address the diverse needs of trafficking survivors and empower them to rebuild their lives.

In 2021, the Agency received, sheltered, and rehabilitated a total of One Thousand, Four Hundred and Seventy (1,470) victims. (Two Hundred and Forty-Four were (244) Male and One Thousand Two Hundred and Sixty-Six (1,266) Female). The case with the highest frequency is Child Abuse with a total number of Three Hundred and Thirteen (313) followed by Procurement for foreign travel which promotes prostitution with a total number of Two Hundred and Eighty Eight (288) victims rescued (NAPTIP, 2021 Annual Report). Other details are in the table below.

S/N	RESCUED VICTIMS OF	MALE	FEMALE
1	Procurement for sexual exploitation internally	2	150
2	Procurement for sexual exploitation externally	0	250
3	Online recruitment for Pornography	0	11
4	Procurement for Foreign Travel which Promotes Prostitution	0	288
5	Victims bought or sold for any purpose	14	32
6	Forced Labour in Nigeria	27	58
7	Forced Labour Outside Nigeria	39	16
8	Child domestic labour/inflicting grievous harm	23	92
9	Wandering	3	7
10	Forced marriage	0	3
11	Abduction from Guardianship	1	6
12	Missing child	10	7
13	Sexual abuse	4	50
14	Abandoned Children	1	3
15	Assisted Voluntary Returnee	0	2

16	Illegal migrants	6	4
17	Child abuse	98	215
18	Illegal child adoption	9	9
19	Custody battle	2	2
20	Violence against persons	1	8
21	Child of victim	2	4
22	Family Crisis	0	2
23	Safekeeping	1	5
24	Surrogate	0	1
25	Former victim	0	1
26	Harmful traditional practices	1	0
	Total	244	1226

**Source:** NAPTIP, 2021

NAPTIP also facilitates the rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims through vocational training and skills development programs. These initiatives aim to equip survivors with the necessary skills and resources to pursue sustainable livelihoods and achieve economic independence. By offering training in various fields such as tailoring, agriculture, and entrepreneurship, NAPTIP empowers survivors to become self-reliant and build brighter futures for them. Additionally, the agency provides support in accessing educational opportunities and job placement services, facilitating the successful reintegration of survivors into their communities (ILO, 2018).

**NAPTIP's Awareness and Prevention Campaigns:** NAPTIP's awareness and prevention campaigns play a crucial role in combating human trafficking in Nigeria by educating the public about the dangers of trafficking and empowering communities to recognize and report suspected cases. Through a combination of mass media campaigns, community outreach initiatives, and educational programs, NAPTIP endeavours to raise awareness about the various forms of trafficking, the tactics used by traffickers, and the rights of potential victims.

**International Cooperation** is a critical aspect of NAPTIP's efforts to prevent human trafficking in Nigeria, as trafficking networks often operate across borders, necessitating collaboration with foreign governments, international organizations, and non-governmental partners. By working with international stakeholders, NAPTIP enhances its capacity to address the transnational nature of trafficking, share information and intelligence, and implement coordinated responses to combat this crime.

NAPTIP participates actively in regional and international initiatives aimed at strengthening anti-trafficking efforts. The agency engages with regional bodies such as the Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) to develop common strategies, protocols, and action plans to combat trafficking in the West African region and beyond. Through participation in forums, conferences, and working groups, NAPTIP contributes its expertise and experiences to broader discussions on trafficking prevention and victim protection (European Union, 2021). Furthermore, NAPTIP collaborates with international organizations and non-governmental partners to enhance its operational capacity and effectiveness. The agency receives technical assistance, training, and financial support from organizations such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and various non-governmental organizations working to combat human trafficking. These partnerships enable NAPTIP to strengthen its institutional capacity, improve its service delivery to trafficking victims, and implement best practices in preventing and prosecuting trafficking (European Union, 2021).

### **Challenges of NAPTIP in the Prevention of Human Trafficking**

NAPTIP faces numerous challenges in its fight against human trafficking. Some of these challenges include:

**Resource Constraints:** 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 (Spear, 2020). 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 (United Nations, 2019).

**Cross-Border Coordination:** Cross-border coordination presents a significant challenge in the collaborative efforts between the NAPTIP and its partners, like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), in combating human trafficking. Human trafficking often involves transnational networks, necessitating effective coordination and cooperation across borders (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). However, challenges like differing legal frameworks, jurisdictional issues, and diplomatic hurdles can impede seamless collaboration. One of the primary obstacles to cross-border coordination is the variation in legal frameworks and enforcement mechanisms among countries. Human trafficking laws may differ significantly from one country to another, complicating efforts to harmonize strategies and prosecute perpetrators (Shelley, 2010). Additionally, differences in legal systems, procedures, and evidentiary standards can hinder the sharing of information and evidence across borders, hampering joint investigations and prosecutions (United Nations, 2019).

**Victim Identification and Protection:** Victim identification and protection pose significant challenges to NAPTIP in combating human trafficking. Identifying victims of trafficking is often complex due to factors such as the hidden nature of the crime, victims' fear of retaliation, and their reluctance to come forward (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). As a result, many victims remain undetected, leaving them vulnerable to continued exploitation and abuse.

Once 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 (International Organization for Migration, 2021). NAPTIP faces

challenges in meeting these needs due to limited resources, capacity constraints, and the diverse needs of trafficking victims.

**Data Collection and Research:** 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 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). 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).

**Legal and Judicial Challenges:** Legal and judicial challenges present significant obstacles in combating human trafficking. Enforcing anti-trafficking laws and ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice are fundamental aspects of NAPTIP's mandate. However, several challenges within the legal and judicial systems hinder the effective prosecution of trafficking cases (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2018). One challenge is the lengthy and complex legal procedures involved in prosecuting trafficking cases. Corruption and lack of accountability within the legal and judicial systems further undermine anti-trafficking efforts. Traffickers may exploit weaknesses in the legal system, such as bribery, collusion, or intimidation of officials, to evade prosecution and continue their criminal activities (International Organization for Migration, 2021). Moreover, victims of trafficking may face obstacles in accessing justice, including discrimination, stigma, and lack of awareness about their rights and legal remedies.

## Conclusion

The menace of human trafficking is damaging, disastrous, and devastating to the victims, the families, and the society at large. Human trafficking in Nigeria represents a multifaceted and deeply entrenched issue with far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Rooted in a complex interplay of socioeconomic, political, and cultural factors, trafficking perpetuates cycles of exploitation, vulnerability, and impunity, undermining the dignity, rights, and well-being of its victims. From the causes such as poverty, unemployment, conflict, and demand for cheap labor and sexual services to the impacts encompassing individual trauma, loss of human capital, social disruption, health risks, stigmatization, and undermining the rule of law, the toll of trafficking is profound and multifaceted.

NAPTIP stands at the forefront of Nigeria's fight against human trafficking, demonstrating a commitment to combating this pervasive crime through its multifaceted approach to prevention, prosecution, and protection. However, given the transnational nature of human trafficking, NAPTIP recognizes the importance of international collaborations to effectively address the complexities of this issue. Through partnerships with various international organizations, foreign governments, and non-governmental entities, NAPTIP has been able to leverage resources, expertise, and networks to enhance its capacity to combat human trafficking. These collaborations have facilitated information sharing, capacity building, and coordinated efforts to dismantle trafficking networks operating across borders. Moreover, NAPTIP's engagement in bilateral and multilateral discussions has contributed to the



strengthening of legal frameworks and policies related to human trafficking at the international level, fostering a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to address this global challenge. Despite the progress made, human trafficking remains a formidable challenge requiring sustained efforts and collaboration at both national and international levels.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following are the recommendations:

- 1. Prevention through Education and Awareness:** Implementing comprehensive educational programs targeted at vulnerable populations is crucial. By raising awareness about the tactics used by traffickers, recognizing signs of exploitation, and educating individuals on how to seek help, we can empower people to protect themselves and others from falling victim to trafficking. This approach not only addresses the immediate need for prevention but also contributes to long-term societal change by equipping communities with the knowledge and tools to combat trafficking effectively.
- 2. Establish Specialized Rehabilitation Centers:** These centers should offer comprehensive support services, including medical care, psychological counseling, legal assistance, vocational training, and reintegration support. By providing a safe and supportive environment for survivors to heal and rebuild their lives, these specialized rehabilitation centers can help mitigate the long-term effects of trafficking and empower survivors to overcome their trauma and reintegrate into society successfully.
- 3. Enhance Collaboration and Coordination with Relevant Stakeholders:** NAPTIP should actively engage with government agencies, law enforcement bodies, civil society organizations, international partners, and communities to develop 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.
- 4. Establish a Unified Data-Sharing Mechanism:** This mechanism should facilitate the exchange of information and data between NAPTIP, and other relevant agencies enabling better coordination, analysis, and response to human trafficking trends and patterns. By harmonizing data collection methods and sharing relevant information promptly, all parties can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the scope and dynamics of human trafficking in Nigeria. Additionally, this unified data-sharing mechanism should prioritize data security and confidentiality to ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards. By leveraging technology and best practices in data management, NAPTIP can enhance their collaborative efforts and optimize resources for a more effective response to human trafficking.
- 5. Promote Economic Empowerment:** Implement programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the socioeconomic factors that contribute to trafficking vulnerability, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. Provide economic empowerment opportunities, including skills training, job placement services, and microfinance programs, particularly targeting at-risk populations.

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