



## IMPACT OF TRAFFICKING ON NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the implications of human trafficking for Nigeria's national security, with a particular focus on Lagos State as a critical economic and migration hub. Adopting a mixed-methods research design, the study integrates quantitative data derived from structured questionnaires with qualitative evidence obtained from secondary sources, including scholarly literature, official reports, and archival materials, to ensure comprehensive and reliable analysis. The findings indicate that human trafficking constitutes a significant national security threat, as it facilitates the proliferation of organized crime networks, weakens border security systems, and places considerable strain on security institutions. In light of these findings, the study recommends the strengthening of border management mechanisms and enhanced inter-agency collaboration as strategic measures to effectively combat trafficking networks and mitigate their adverse impact on national security.*

**Keywords:** Human Trafficking, National Security, Border security vulnerabilities, Lagos state

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### 1.0 Introduction

Human trafficking constitutes a severe violation of human rights and human dignity and is widely regarded as a contemporary form of slavery. It encompasses the recruitment, transportation, transfer, or harbouring of persons through coercion, deception, or abuse of vulnerability for purposes such as forced labour, sexual exploitation, domestic servitude, and other forms of exploitation. Globally, human trafficking remains one of the most profitable forms of transnational organized crime, thriving in environments marked by weak governance, corruption, and ineffective law enforcement (United Nations, 2000; Malakooti, 2022). Beyond its humanitarian implications, trafficking has increasingly been framed as a critical national security concern due to its capacity to undermine state authority, fuel organized crime, and destabilize social and political systems.

In Nigeria, the problem of human trafficking is particularly acute and multifaceted. The country functions simultaneously as a source, transit, and destination for trafficked persons, especially women and children, driven by structural factors such as poverty, unemployment, internal displacement, and rapid urbanization (Jorge et al., 2021; International Organization for Migration, 2022). Trafficking networks in Nigeria are often deeply embedded within broader criminal economies, intersecting with activities such as money laundering, arms smuggling, and insurgent financing. These linkages exacerbate insecurity, weaken institutional capacity, and erode public trust in governance. The complicity of some public officials and the persistence of porous borders further enable traffickers to operate with relative impunity, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of national security structures (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, 2020).

Recent data underscore the magnitude and persistence of the problem. In 2023 alone, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) reported rescuing 2,112 victims, the majority of whom were women and children, while over 7,000 victims were identified between 2022 and 2024, alongside 205 convictions (NAPTIP, 2024; 2025). Despite these efforts, prosecution rates remain relatively low compared to the scale of the crime, suggesting gaps in enforcement and judicial processes. The human cost of trafficking is immense, with victims often subjected to violence, exploitation, and long-term psychological trauma (Ayodele, 2024). At the same time, trafficking contributes to broader security challenges, including the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, irregular migration, and the recruitment of vulnerable individuals into criminal or armed groups (Salah, 2021).

Within this national context, Lagos State represents a critical focal point in the dynamics of human trafficking. As Nigeria's economic hub and a major center of migration, Lagos provides both opportunities and vulnerabilities that trafficking networks exploit. Its dense population, extensive transport infrastructure, and socio-economic inequalities create conditions conducive to both the supply and movement of trafficked persons. Consequently, the persistence of trafficking activities in Lagos has far-reaching implications not only for human security but also for Nigeria's broader national security architecture.

Despite the scale and severity of human trafficking in Nigeria, the issue has not consistently received adequate political prioritization, and institutional responses remain insufficient relative to the evolving complexity of the crime. This gap underscores the need for a more critical and comprehensive examination of the relationship between human trafficking and national security. Accordingly, this study seeks to achieve two main objectives: (i) to interrogate the impacts of human trafficking on Nigeria's national security, and (ii) to examine the mechanisms put in place by relevant agencies to combat the rising incidence of human trafficking in the country. Through this analysis, the study aims to contribute to policy development and strengthen institutional responses to this persistent and evolving threat.

## 2.0 Literature Review

This segment focuses on issues relating to subject of investigation starting with conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical review.

### 2.1 Conceptual Review

#### Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is broadly conceptualized as a complex process involving the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or receipt of persons through coercive, deceptive, or abusive means for the purpose of exploitation. Nigeria's Trafficking in Persons (Prohibition) Enforcement and Administration Act (2013) defines trafficking as acts whether attempted or completed through which individuals are placed in involuntary servitude, including sexual exploitation, forced labour, domestic servitude, or slavery-like conditions, both within and across national borders. This legal understanding aligns with Article 3(a) of the United Nations Palermo Protocol, which emphasizes the use of force, fraud, abuse of power, or inducements to obtain control over persons for exploitative purposes (United Nations, 2020). Collectively, these definitions underscore exploitation as the central element of trafficking, irrespective of the victim's initial consent.

Beyond its legal definition, human trafficking is widely regarded as a form of transnational organized crime with far-reaching social and security implications. Adeyemo (2020) characterizes trafficking as a threat not only to individual victims but also to national peace and security. Scholars distinguish trafficking from human smuggling, noting that while

smuggling primarily involves the illegal movement of persons across borders, trafficking is fundamentally exploitative and may occur both domestically and internationally (Ogwu, 2022). Typically, victims are recruited through false promises of employment or better living conditions and subsequently subjected to sexual exploitation, forced labour, or other forms of servitude. Traffickers often confiscate victims' travel documents and employ threats or violence to maintain control, reinforcing the organized and coercive nature of the crime (Aliyu, 2021). This interconnectedness of deception, coercion, and organized criminal networks situates human trafficking as a critical issue within contemporary security and governance discourse.

## **National Security**

National security is fundamentally anchored in the universal human need for safety and protection, which Maslow identifies as second only to physiological needs in his hierarchy of human necessities (Abiodun et al., 2019). Contemporary scholarship conceptualizes national security as a multidimensional construct that extends beyond traditional military defense to include political, economic, energy, and homeland security. According to Wilson (2022), political security ensures the protection of state sovereignty and governance structures, while economic security safeguards a nation's capacity to manage its financial and productive resources. Homeland security particularly border management, immigration control, and transportation security is especially relevant in the study of transnational crimes such as human trafficking, which exploit institutional weaknesses and porous borders to undermine state authority and internal stability.

In addition to these dimensions, national security encompasses cyber, human, and environmental security, reflecting the evolving and interconnected nature of contemporary threats (Wilson, 2021). Human security, which focuses on protection from hunger, disease, repression, and social disruption, is directly undermined by human trafficking through widespread victimization, social dislocation, and erosion of public trust. As Abolurin (2014) argues, security involves the preservation of core societal values and the absence of threats to lives and property, a responsibility that increasingly extends beyond the state to society as a whole. Williams (2008) further defines national security as the capacity of a state to control domestic and external conditions necessary for self-determination, prosperity, and well-being. Within this broader framework, human trafficking constitutes a critical non-military threat that weakens political cohesion, fuels economic instability, strains security institutions, and compromises Nigeria's territorial integrity. Thus, understanding national security as a composite of military, economic, political, and human dimensions provides a comprehensive analytical perspective for examining the security implications of human trafficking in Nigeria.

## **2.2 Empirical Review**

This section of the literature review critically examines the perspectives of scholars in relation to the study's sub-themes.

### **Impacts of human trafficking on Nigeria's national security**

Natsa and Ade (2025) examine Nigerian border security and the challenges posed by trafficking in persons, demonstrating that porous borders and weak border governance structures significantly facilitate the uncontrolled movement of trafficked persons across Nigeria's frontiers. Their findings reveal that ineffective surveillance and enforcement mechanisms allow criminal networks to operate with minimal resistance, thereby undermining national sovereignty. The study further establishes that human trafficking compounds national insecurity by escalating illegal migration flows, overstressing border

control agencies, and serving as a conduit for other transnational threats such as arms smuggling and organized crime syndicates.

Complementing this perspective, Abiodun, Oluwagbemi, and Adebajo (2024) extend the security analysis beyond border vulnerabilities to internal peace and stability. Their study synthesizes national crime statistics, policing records, and legal cases to demonstrate that human trafficking networks exacerbate communal instability, violence, and societal distrust across Nigeria. The authors argue that trafficking intersects with insurgent activities and organized criminal groups, particularly along transnational corridors such as the Benin-Nigeria axis. By fueling social dislocation and weakening community resilience, human trafficking undermines peacebuilding efforts and erodes public confidence in law enforcement institutions, thereby posing a direct threat to internal security.

Similarly, Obikaeze, Inah, and Efanodor-Obeten (2021) reinforce the argument that border insecurity and human trafficking are mutually reinforcing phenomena. Their content analysis reveals that Nigeria's inadequate border surveillance and enforcement capacity have enabled the proliferation of trafficking networks that threaten territorial integrity and national stability. The study conceptualizes human trafficking not merely as a humanitarian or human rights issue but as a critical national security concern, given its role in facilitating the circulation of exploitative and criminal networks across borders. By linking migration patterns with security agency reports, the authors demonstrate how border insecurity amplifies the national security risks associated with trafficking in persons.

### **Mechanisms put in place by relevant agencies to tackle the rising human trafficking**

Bello and Okonjo (2025) provide a comprehensive empirical assessment of the enforcement mechanisms employed by the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), with particular focus on victim rescue operations, criminal prosecutions, and reintegration programmes. Using multiple case studies and comparative analysis with similar agencies in West Africa, the authors identify notable achievements, including successful high-profile rescues and prosecution campaigns. However, the study also reveals persistent structural challenges such as inadequate operational funding, judicial delays, and insufficient post-rescue victim support systems, which collectively undermine the sustainability of these enforcement efforts. The authors therefore advocate for enhanced technological integration, strengthened victim support services, and expanded international cooperation as critical mechanisms for improving Nigeria's anti-trafficking response.

Building on this institutional perspective, Shuaibu (2024) examines the broader institutional frameworks for combating human trafficking in Nigeria and their implications for national security. The study demonstrates that deficiencies in law enforcement capacity and weak inter-agency coordination significantly constrain the effectiveness of anti-trafficking mechanisms. Drawing on operational data from 2015 to 2023, Shuaibu establishes a direct correlation between institutional performance gaps and rising trafficking incidents, particularly in relation to forced labour exploitation and transnational criminal activities. The findings suggest that under-resourced and poorly coordinated agencies, including NAPTIP, are unable to adequately disrupt trafficking networks, thereby reinforcing the need for coherent institutional synergy and sustained capacity building as core anti-trafficking mechanisms.

Similarly, Agwu (2025) situates Nigeria's anti-human trafficking mechanisms within a broader socio-economic and governance context. The study critically analyzes how weak enforcement structures, systemic corruption, and pervasive socio-economic vulnerabilities have enabled trafficking to evolve into a resilient and profitable criminal enterprise. Agwu

argues that traffickers exploit governance and regulatory gaps to sustain transnational networks that undermine state authority and exacerbate insecurity. By linking human trafficking to organized crime and cross-border criminality, the study underscores the necessity of integrated and multi-layered response mechanisms that simultaneously target trafficker networks (supply side) and address vulnerability factors such as poverty and unemployment (demand side). The review therefore reinforces the argument that effective anti-trafficking mechanisms must transcend enforcement alone and incorporate socio-economic and regional strategies.

### 2.3 Theoretical Review

This paper adopted Modern Slavery Theory. It was originally articulated by Kevin Bales (1999), offers a multifaceted analytical framework for understanding the structural and systemic dimensions of human trafficking. This theory presents a range of theoretical propositions that illuminate the complexities inherent in trafficking processes, while also offering critical insights into the socio-political and economic dynamics within both source (sending) and destination (receiving) countries. Bales (1999) argues that, although individual cases of human trafficking exhibit considerable variation owing to the unique socio-economic, cultural, and political contexts of each country, certain recurring patterns and structural commonalities persist across different contexts. Among these shared factors are systemic corruption, widespread poverty, high unemployment rates, weak governance structures, and demographic vulnerabilities. These elements collectively create enabling environments that foster and sustain modern forms of slavery.

Furthermore, Bales' theoretical contribution is significant in its ability to contextualize trafficking within the globalized economy, where exploitative labour practices and the commodification of human beings are perpetuated through deeply entrenched inequalities and market demands. As such, the Modern Slavery Theory not only accounts for the agency of traffickers and victims but also underscores the broader institutional and structural conditions that permit the continuation of such practices. In the context of this study which seeks to explore the root causes, typologies, and manifestations of human trafficking, alongside an evaluation of existing prevention and management strategies the application of Modern Slavery Theory is particularly relevant, as it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the opportunity structures and risk environments that enable the proliferation of human trafficking. It also provides a robust conceptual foundation for analyzing the interplay between individual behavior and systemic vulnerabilities within the trafficking landscape.

### 3.0 Methodology

The study adopted a mixed research design, which involved the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were generated through the administration of structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were obtained from secondary sources such as scholarly literature, official reports, time-series documents, and other relevant written materials. The rationale for adopting a mixed research design was to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information from multiple and credible sources, thereby enhancing the robustness of the findings.

#### 3.1 Study Area

The study was geographically limited to Lagos State, with a focus on selected Local Government Areas of Ojo, Alimosho, Mushin, Eti-Osa, and Apapa. The Local Government Area were chosen due to their strategic relevance to human trafficking routes, population density, commercial activities, and security operations.

### 3.2 Population and Sample size

The study population stood at 17,703 respondents, comprising relevant officials of organizations in Lagos State, including the Nigeria Police Force (5,690), Nigeria Immigration Service (3,400), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (3,125), National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) (897), National Boundary Commission (679), Lagos State Task Force on Human Trafficking (3,567), and the Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour (NACTAL) (345).

These figures represent administrative and operational estimates based on available institutional records, deployment patterns, and personnel distribution within Lagos State, as disaggregated official staff strength data at the state level are not consistently published by the respective agencies. The use of estimated population figures is consistent with established practices in social and security research where precise personnel data are restricted due to operational and security considerations. Consequently, the estimated population was considered sufficiently reliable and appropriate for determining the sample size and conducting the analysis.

The sample size representative of the target population in this study is 400. It is determined using Taro Yamane formula as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where N= population

e= level of significance. This is a constant figure of 0.05

In applying the formula to determine the sample size, this process is followed

$$n = \frac{17,703}{1 + 17,703(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{17,703}{1 + 17,703(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{17,703}{1 + 44.2575}$$

$$n = \frac{17,703}{45.2575}$$

$$n = 399.99$$

$$n \approx 400(\text{sample size})$$

### 3.3 Sampling Technique

In this paper, the non-probability or purposive and stratified sampling technique were adopted. Purposive sampling according to Ajay & Micah (2014) is a sampling technique that helps the researcher to use his or her discretion and judgement in identifying the population to be studied. It is based on the conviction that the population that the researcher identified will give the accurate data that will be used for this paper. The selection of the population is done purposively. As such, the paper adopted quantitative and qualitative designs; the

researcher also got documented data from the study population for analysis. Also, the researcher purposively determined those that were approached for the needed data.

Also, the stratified sampling technique was used since the research population is made up of different characteristics in terms of sex, race, age, marital state and department. This type of sampling technique is considered appropriate for this paper due to the huge number of research population and the need to have a representative figure that can be effectively managed (Ajay & Micah, 2014). Moreover, stratified technique helps better data analysis and enables the researcher to be more thorough in handling the groups represented in the population distribution.

### 3.4 Method of Data Analysis

This study adopted both primary and secondary methods of data collection. The primary data were generated through the administration of questionnaires and the conduct of in-depth interviews. Out of a total of 400 respondents sampled for the study, 393 respondents were administered questionnaires, while 7 key informants were interviewed to obtain qualitative insights on the nexus between human trafficking and national security in Nigeria. The secondary data were sourced from relevant government reports, policy documents, scholarly journals, and publications focusing on human trafficking and its implications for Nigeria's national security.

In analyzing the data collected, the study employed simple percentages and tabular presentation for the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires, while content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data derived from interviews and secondary sources. The adoption of this methodological approach enabled the researcher to generate objective, reliable, and comprehensive information on the impacts of human trafficking on Nigeria's national security

### 4.0 Results and Discussion

Below is the analysis of responses as well as the data supplied through the questionnaire distributed and interview questions administered to the respondents.

Table 1.1 Showing Number of Questionnaire Returned

S/N	Name of Organisation	Population	%Percentage	Questionnaire distributed	Questionnaire returned	Questionnaire not Returned
1	Nigeria Police Force	5,690	32.14%	126	123	3
2	Nigeria Immigration Service	3,400	19.21%	75	73	2
3	Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps	3,125	17.65%	69	67	2
4	National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP)	897	5.07%	20	19	1
5	National Boundary Commission	679	3.84%	15	15	0

6	Lagos State Task Force on Human Trafficking	3,567	20.15%	79	77	2
7	Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour	345	1.95%	9	9	0
Total		17,703	100%	400	393	10

Source: Field Survey, September, 2025

Table 1.1 presents the distribution and retrieval of questionnaires administered to selected security agencies and anti-trafficking organizations relevant to the study on the impacts of human trafficking on Nigeria’s national security. The table indicates that a total population of 17,703 personnel was drawn from seven key institutions, from which 400 questionnaires were proportionally distributed. Out of this number, 393 questionnaires were successfully retrieved, while 10 questionnaires were not returned, representing an overall response rate of 97.46%. This high response rate suggests a strong level of cooperation among respondents and enhances the reliability and validity of the data used for the study. A closer examination of the table shows that the Nigeria Police Force, which constitutes the largest proportion of the study population (32.14%), received the highest number of questionnaires (126). Of these, 123 questionnaires were returned, while only 3 were not retrieved. This high return rate reflects the central role of the Nigeria Police Force in internal security management and its direct involvement in addressing crimes associated with human trafficking, including organized crime, illegal migration, and transnational criminal networks that pose threats to national security. Similarly, the Nigeria Immigration Service, accounting for 19.21% of the population, had 75 questionnaires distributed, out of which 73 were returned. This high retrieval rate underscores the relevance of the Service in border management and migration control, areas that are critically affected by human trafficking activities. The Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, which represents 17.65% of the population, recorded 67 returned questionnaires out of 69 distributed. Furthermore, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP), the statutory body responsible for combating human trafficking in Nigeria, had 20 questionnaires distributed, with 19 successfully retrieved. The National Boundary Commission and the Network Against Child Trafficking, Abuse and Labour recorded complete questionnaire retrievals, with all distributed questionnaires returned.

Table 1.2 Impacts of human trafficking on Nigeria’s national security

S/N	Statement	S.D	D	Neutral	S.A	A
1.	Human trafficking contributes to the growth of organized crime networks that threaten Nigeria’s internal security.	11 2.87%	45 11.75%	16 4.18%	248 64.75%	63 16.45%
2.	Human trafficking undermines border security by facilitating illegal migration and cross-border criminal activities.	41 10.70%	64 16.71%	11 2.87%	209 54.57%	58 15.15%
3.	Human trafficking places significant pressure on Nigeria’s security agencies, reducing their capacity to effectively address other security challenges.	38 9.92%	63 16.45%	52 13.58%	142 37.07%	88 22.98%

Source: Field Survey, September, 2025

The data presented in Table 1.2 reveal a strong consensus among respondents that human trafficking constitutes a significant threat to Nigeria’s national security. Regarding the first

statement, which posits that human trafficking contributes to the growth of organized crime networks that threaten Nigeria's internal security, the majority of respondents expressed strong agreement. Specifically, 64.75% strongly agreed and 16.45% agreed, resulting in a combined 81.20% affirmative response. In contrast, only 14.62% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 4.18% remained neutral. This distribution suggests that respondents overwhelmingly perceive human trafficking as a catalyst for organized criminal networks, which undermine internal security through activities such as money laundering, arms trafficking, and violent crimes. The above analysis is reinforced by evidence obtained from the interviews.

For instance, Interview Respondent 1, a security practitioner, noted that:

*Human trafficking syndicates rarely operate in isolation but are deeply embedded within broader criminal networks that engage in arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and financial crimes. According to the respondent, the proceeds from trafficking are often used to finance other criminal activities, thereby intensifying threats to Nigeria's internal security. This perspective corroborates the high level of agreement recorded in the survey and provides contextual insight into how trafficking fuels organized crime.*

Similarly, responses to the second statement indicate that human trafficking significantly undermines border security by facilitating illegal migration and cross-border criminal activities. A combined 69.72% of respondents either strongly agreed (54.57%) or agreed (15.15%) with this assertion. Meanwhile, 27.41% disagreed or strongly disagreed, and only 2.87% were neutral. These results highlight the perceived linkage between human trafficking and porous borders, suggesting that trafficking networks exploit weak border controls to move victims and collabourate with transnational criminal groups.

In support of this analysis, Interview Respondent 2, an official familiar with border management operations, emphasized that:

*Nigeria's extensive and poorly monitored borders provide trafficking networks with opportunities to move victims across international boundaries with relative ease. The respondent further explained that traffickers often collabourate with other cross-border criminal actors, thereby complicating border security management. This qualitative account aligns with the survey results and underscores the role of weak border governance in facilitating human trafficking.*

The third statement examined the pressure placed on Nigeria's security agencies by human trafficking activities. The findings indicate that 60.05% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that human trafficking strains security agencies and reduces their capacity to address other security challenges. Although this level of agreement is slightly lower than in the previous statements, it still represents a clear majority. Notably, 26.37% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 13.58% remained neutral. This suggests that while most respondents acknowledge the burden human trafficking places on security institutions, there is some divergence in perception, possibly reflecting differences in awareness of agency capacity or resource allocation. Insights from the interviews further illuminate this issue, as respondents pointed out that security agencies are often overstretched due to the multiplicity of security threats facing the country. The need to investigate trafficking cases, rescue victims, and prosecute offenders was described as placing additional demands on limited manpower and resources. Consequently, efforts to combat human trafficking may inadvertently divert attention and resources from other pressing security concerns such as terrorism, insurgency, and banditry.

Table 1.3 Mechanisms put in place by relevant agencies to tackle the rising human trafficking

S/N	Statement	S.D	D	Neutral	S.A	A
4	Border control mechanisms and surveillance systems have been strengthened to prevent human trafficking across Nigeria’s borders.	12 3.13%	51 13.32%	13 3.40%	258 67.36%	49 12.79%
5	Specialized units and trained personnel exist within security agencies to handle human trafficking cases.	38 9.92%	58 15.14%	27 7.05%	231 60.31%	29 7.57%
6	Public awareness and sensitization programmes have been effectively implemented to educate citizens on the dangers of human trafficking.	41 10.70%	68 17.75%	26 6.79%	177 46.22%	71 18.54%

Source: Field Survey, September, 2025

The data presented in Table 1.3 examine respondents’ perceptions of institutional mechanisms implemented by relevant agencies to address the growing challenge of human trafficking in Nigeria. With respect to the first statement, which assesses the strengthening of border control mechanisms and surveillance systems, the results reveal a high level of agreement among respondents. A combined 80.15% of respondents either strongly agreed (67.36%) or agreed (12.79%) that border control and surveillance systems have been reinforced to prevent human trafficking across Nigeria’s borders. In contrast, only 16.45% disagreed or strongly disagreed, while a minimal 3.40% remained neutral. This quantitative finding is supported by qualitative insights from an interview with Respondent 3, a senior official in the Nigerian Immigration Service, who stated:

*We have increased patrols and installed modern surveillance equipment at strategic border points, which has significantly reduced illegal cross-border movement associated with trafficking.”*

This improvement demonstrates a proactive approach by security agencies, reflecting a strategic investment in technological and human resources to enhance border security and disrupt trafficking networks.

The second statement evaluates the existence of specialized units and trained personnel within security agencies to handle human trafficking cases. The findings show that 67.88% of respondents either strongly agreed (60.31%) or agreed (7.57%) with this statement, indicating general confidence in the institutional capacity of security agencies to address trafficking-related crimes. However, a notable proportion of respondents (25.06%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 7.05% remained neutral. This divergence in perception is echoed in the interview with Respondent 4, a law enforcement officer in the Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, who observed:

*While we have dedicated units, their deployment is often limited, and some regions remain underserved, which undermines our overall effectiveness.*

This highlights the uneven distribution of resources and personnel, suggesting that institutional capacity alone is insufficient without strategic allocation and comprehensive coverage across all vulnerable regions.

The third statement focuses on the effectiveness of public awareness and sensitization programmes aimed at educating citizens on the dangers of human trafficking. The results

indicate a comparatively lower level of agreement. While 64.76% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that awareness programmes have been effectively implemented, a substantial 28.45% expressed disagreement, and 6.79% remained neutral. This suggests that although awareness campaigns are in place, their reach and impact may be inconsistent. In support of this analysis, Smith (2020) argues that public sensitization programmes often fail to address the structural and socio-economic factors that make communities vulnerable to trafficking, highlighting the need for targeted and context-specific interventions. The relatively high level of disagreement in the survey implies that existing awareness efforts may not sufficiently penetrate vulnerable communities or adequately address the socio-economic drivers that expose individuals to trafficking risks.

#### 4.1 Discussion of Findings

From the first objective of the paper, the findings reveal that human trafficking is widely perceived as a serious threat to Nigeria's national security, as it contributes to the expansion of organized crime networks, weakens border security, and overstretches the capacity of security agencies. This underscores the recognition of human trafficking as a multidimensional security challenge that diverts critical resources from addressing other major threats such as terrorism and insurgency. This finding is consistent with the position advanced by Aliyu (2021), who argues that human trafficking operates as a form of transnational organized crime that undermines state institutions, fuels corruption, and places significant strain on national security systems. Aliyu contends that trafficking networks often intersect with other illicit activities, thereby complicating security governance and diverting attention and resources from critical national security priorities. By aligning with this scholarly perspective, the present study reinforces the argument that human trafficking is not merely a social or humanitarian concern but a strategic security threat with far-reaching implications for state stability and institutional effectiveness in Nigeria.

Secondly, the findings indicate that while institutional mechanisms to combat human trafficking such as strengthened border controls, specialized security units, and awareness programmes have been implemented, their effectiveness remains uneven. Although respondents generally acknowledge improvements in institutional capacity, persistent gaps in public sensitization and outreach suggest that existing measures have not fully addressed the underlying vulnerabilities and socio-economic factors sustaining human trafficking in Nigeria. This finding aligns with the position of Shuaibu (2024), who argues that despite notable institutional advancements in Nigeria's anti-trafficking framework, the impact of such measures is often constrained by inadequate grassroots engagement and limited public awareness. Shuaibu emphasizes that without sustained community level sensitization and targeted socio-economic interventions, enforcement-driven strategies alone are insufficient to curb trafficking practices. This scholarly perspective reinforces the present study's observation that while institutional responses have improved structurally, their practical effectiveness is undermined by enduring socio-economic inequalities and weak outreach mechanisms.

#### 5.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

This study demonstrates that the persistence of human trafficking in Nigeria constitutes a grave and enduring non-traditional security threat, as it not only entrenches and expands transnational criminal networks but also steadily erodes state capacity by overburdening law enforcement and judicial institutions, compromises border security through the exploitation of weak regulatory and surveillance frameworks, and ultimately undermines the legitimacy, effectiveness, and public trust of national security institutions tasked with safeguarding

human and territorial security. However, based on the findings of the study, we therefore make the following recommendations:

- i. The government should strengthen border management and inter-agency collaboration to effectively disrupt trafficking networks. This includes enhancing intelligence sharing among security agencies, improving the deployment of modern surveillance technologies, and increasing manpower and logistical support at border points. Such measures would reduce the operational space available to traffickers and mitigate the security threats posed by transnational criminal networks.
- ii. There is a need to intensify and decentralize public awareness and sensitization programmes, particularly within vulnerable communities. These initiatives should be complemented by targeted socio-economic empowerment programmes aimed at addressing poverty, unemployment, and limited educational opportunities that expose individuals to trafficking risks. A more people-centred approach would enhance the effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts and contribute to sustainable national security outcomes.

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