Implementing the Anti-Human Trafficking Policy in Nigeria: Trials and Tribulations

Usman Mikail Usman[1], Raja Noriza Raja Ariffin[2], Azmah Binti Haji Othman[3]

[1,3]Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, MALAYSIA
[2]Department of Administrative Studies and Politics, Faculty of Economics and Administration University of Malaya, MALAYSIA.
Corresponding author (Usman UM). E-mail addresses: umu9933@gmail.com.

Abstract: This study analyses the implementation of the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) Policy in Nigeria. Nigeria was selected due to the continuing increase in human trafficking and the subsequent challenges resulting from this phenomenon. The government has taken critical measures to fight human traffickers particularly by using the United Nations protection, prevention, and prosecution approach. However, the method seems to have failed in reducing the menace and the lack of coordination and communication amongst relevant organisations handling human trafficking seems to have been the main cause that have hampered the implementation of the policy. The research uses qualitative inquiry of one-on-one interviews with informants from the NAPTIP, academics and non-governmental organisations involved in combating human trafficking. The findings show that there is a need to have a well-defined task and enhanced coordination and communication amongst the relevant anti-trafficking agencies.

Keywords: human trafficking, policy implementation, coordination, communication, NAPTIP, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human trafficking is a global issue that has taken a new form and dimension. Most countries are either destination, transit or source nation to human trafficking. Nigeria is no exception to this sad phenomenon. It is a serious violation towards the vulnerable and largely innocent victims from a poor background. Coordination and communication amongst relevant stakeholders handling human trafficking have failed to reduce the menace (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters, 2015). Meanwhile, human traffickers have seriously taken advantage of the failure to curtail their deadly activities and consequently established a well-coordinated network. Nigeria is significantly seen as a source and to a lesser extent, as a transiting and destination country for children, women, and men who are exploited mainly for prostitution and labour exploitation (US Department of States, 2018). Several human trafficking studies (Ikeora, 2016; Ikpeze & Ifemeje, 2015; Kangiwa, 2015; May 2017; Oluwabuyi, 2015; Plambech, 2017) cited Nigeria as a critical

nation to female international prostitution. Exploited Nigerian women are found in more than thirty countries. Unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, lack of education and peer pressure are the major cause leading to international prostitution and other kinds of human trafficking (Kangiwa, 2015; May 2017; Oluwabuyi, 2015; US Department of States, 2018; Usman, Ariffin, & Othman, 2018).

To battle human trafficking, the government of Nigeria established the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, which is well known as NAPTIP, in 2003. Prior to this, there was no particular policy or law that criminalises human trafficking in Nigeria. Thus, the 2003 NAPTIP Act is the fundamental policy in Nigeria that shapes the process of implementation in fighting human trafficking. It covers preventing trafficking, protecting victims, prosecuting traffickers, and communicating and coordinating with relevant stakeholders to combat human trafficking (National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, 2015). NAPTIP officers are the key actors that shaped the coordination and communication of the anti-trafficking policy implementation in Nigeria. As in many other countries, putting policy into action in Nigeria is challenging due to the many obstacles. This conundrum is due to the fact that the government needs to deliver services through effective communication and coordination with various relevant organisations. Many researchers (Fahrner & Klenk, 2018; Peters 2018) point to difficulties in communication and coordination as the setback to policy implementation. (Powell, 2018). Although a crucial number of Nigerians are trafficked internationally, human trafficking studies focusing on the implementation of policy are virtually none available. Much attention is paid to the trafficked persons, neglecting key stakeholders such as enforcement officers and providers of services (Kim, Park, Quiring, & Barrett, 2018; UNODC, 2018). This study describes the indispensability of communication and coordination to the implementation of the anti-trafficking policy in Nigeria, in light of the various stakeholders' relations. It investigates the challenges faced by the implementers of the NAPTIP Act. The investigation tries to address the gap in the policy that serves as a drawback to the success of the anti-trafficking policy implementation. The aim of this study is to examine the twin (coordination and communication) avoidable obstacles to the implementation of the NAPTIP anti-trafficking policy in Nigeria

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Policy implementation unites various organisations in pursuits of a harmonious relation to achieve targeted goals. The link between implementing organisations are numerous that end in creating a mutual correlation among the organisations. This interconnectedness requires communication and coordination activities. However, a fragmented process of implementation is a setback to attain human trafficking policy objectives (Peters, 2018; Quah, 2016). Grindle (2017) states that coordination is a complex task and at the same time is a crucial part in any integrated program. Several programs have negatively been affected as a result of limited communication and inter-agency coordination due to organisational rivalry. A catastrophic human exploitation industry grows every day (Usman, Ariffin, & Othman, 2017).

Human trafficking, which is regarded as a severe type of human exploitation is a clandestine, complex and multifaceted contemporary international phenomenon. Nigeria has slipped in its ranking, signifying a continued and persistent human trafficking exploitation at an alarming rate. To investigate this phenomenon, this research undertakes an in-depth study of implementation of policy in Nigeria.   Figure 2.1 shows that in 2001 to 2003 Nigeria was a tier 2 nation, while in 2004, a tier 2 watch list state. Then, from 2005 to 2008 it was a tier 2 country. However, the year 2009 to 2011 saw Nigeria in a better position at the level of a tier 1, which means that it has fully meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's minimum standard.   It slipped in ranking to tier 2 in 2012-2016, and a further slipped to tier 2 watch list in 2017-2018 global ranking (US Department of State, 2008; 2018).
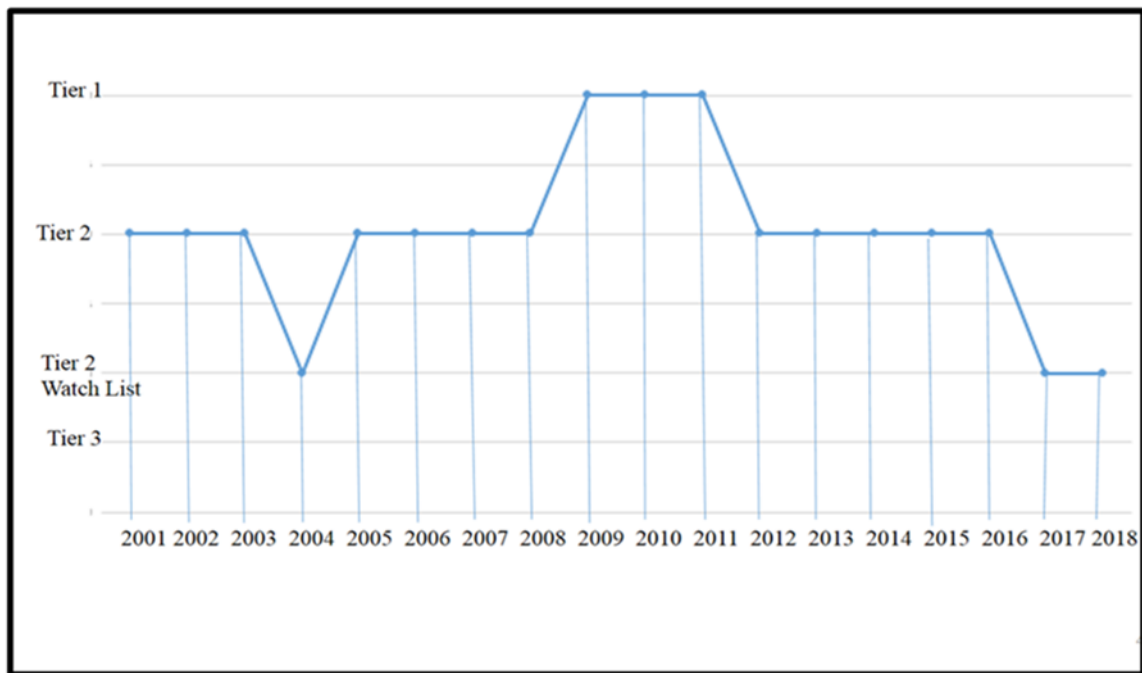

Figure 2.1 Nigeria Annual Tier Ranking
Source: US Department of State (2008; 2018)

Gertson (2015) and Quah (2016) find that agency that have coordination are more fruitful in the fight against human traffickers compared with a non-coordinated organisation. Similarly, Nunez and Meylaerts (2017) state that communication reveals the effect of a policy, reflect a practical and the extent to which the policy translates into implementation. Effective communication is simply a way to protect and realise the policy into action. A policy can be successfully implemented when a clear line of communication for its transmission is well stated (Nunez, & Meylaerts, 2017). Although language may hamper effective communication, having a well-structured policy with a clear guideline and financially supported mechanism can help in creating an enabling implementation environment. Grindle (2017) and Hill and Hupe (2014) mentioned territorial game as a significant obstacle to inter-organisational coordination. In this scenario, a fundamental aspect for most agencies is being able to manage its task independently. In the absence of clear and noteworthy advantages, an agency or organisation is unwilling to cooperate if coordination interferes with its autonomy. Ruffing

(2015) states that a threat to independency increased when collaborators interest differs, coordinating agency operational methods are diverse, and the link between organisations are many and intermingled. In a complicated study such as human trafficking, the nature of moves to be made requires large degrees of communication and resource exchange. In addition, coordination for human trafficking raid or operation and consultation requires collaborative team work. This situation often brought about implicit organisational rivalry, jealousies, and the inclination to hoard as opposed to sharing information (Grindle, 2017; Hill & Hupe 2014 and Ruffing, 2015). Donina and Hasanefendic (2019) study discovers heterogeneity in Italy, Netherlands and Portugal, in terms of their policy reforms within the higher institutions. Haffar and Al-Karaghouli and Irani and Djebarni and Gbadamosi (2019) study uncover implementation to be influenced by lack of a well-defined organisational task, which often affects the agency's performance due to inconsistencies of responsibility and involvement of multiple of actors.

3. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative inquiry utilising case study method was used for this investigation. The aim is to understand the present implementation of policy in combating human trafficking in Nigeria. The interviewees are individuals who are engaged in the implementation of policy and providing services to the victims. The case study has provided detailed information on human trafficking issues. In this case, the approach has provided the richness of data that is not available when using the quantitative method. This is due to the special attention the approach pays to the real life happening on the individuals involved (Yin, 2015). A criterion or purposive sampling was utilised in identifying informants based on their roles and position in dealing with human trafficking and NAPTIP policy implementation. The study collected data via triangulation of interview, observation and document analysis. Semi structured interviews were carried out with informants from the government anti-trafficking agency, non-governmental organisations, and academics. These individuals are directly or indirectly connected to the implementation of the anti-human trafficking policy in Nigeria.

In light of the perspectives of the informants at the time of the interviews and note taking for the observations, organisational and policy issues were the themes distinguished. The emerged themes depend on answers that were authenticated by more than one category of the participants. The thematic discoveries uncover the obstacles confronted by the focal government NAPTIP implementers in realising their obligations in human trafficking implementation of policy.

4. DISCUSSION

Although the obstacles to human trafficking and NAPTIP policy implementation in Nigeria are numerous. this paper will focus on the heterogeneity, communication and coordination and the call for a well-defined task of the anti-human trafficking organisations.

1.1 Heterogeneity of Organisations

The core theme that emerged during the interview was the organisational issue. The nature of the organisational structure affects the inter-agency partners in implementing the NAPTIP anti-trafficking policy in Nigeria. The agency structure was complex despite all the relevant coordinating stakeholders were from the same federal level of government. Also, there was an absence of a well-defined task to the relevant stakeholders to direct them to combat human trafficking and implement the NAPTIP anti-trafficking policy. These scenarios have critically created fragmentation and hostility between the relevant stakeholders. Indeed, implementation among the organisations fighting human traffickers reveals heterogeneous, unfriendly and ill-affected organisational relationships.

There are crucial organisational issues linked to the bureaucratic system in implementing the NAPTIP anti-trafficking policy in Nigeria. The fight against human traffickers includes almost all security agencies and several government ministries and agencies. These engagements tend to create problem, whereby each agency or ministry exercise its control when trafficked victims or case falls under their jurisdiction. As a matter of fact, the handling of victims and traffickers have encountered several complexities, complications, and difficulties. This conundrum occurs particularly when the victims and traffickers had to be transferred to NAPTIP, which act as the lead agency. This situation resulted in several delay, default, and compromise, which had led to an ineffective process. Even though NAPTIP was established with fully trained officers but they have largely remained underutilised. There are rampant and persistent inter-agency rivalries, jealousies, dependency, and hoarding of information. The situation exposes not only the heterogeneity of the organisations fighting human traffickers but also the detrimental implementation of programs. Notably, the absence of combating and defeating human traffickers seems to be due to the heterogenic nature of the organisations in terms of strained communication and coordination between the NAPTIP and the relevant working organisations. As a matter of fact, implementers, that is the interview informants mentioned:

> If you go to the airport, seaport, border post, NAPTIP is not there, there is a need for NAPTIP to be there. Since we have received training on how to identify forge document and to detect suspected trafficking person

> The stakeholders we have, they have their primary job, so this is an additional assignment, and everybody gives preference to his primary job…

> …Those that benefit from training is not our bona fide staff especially from multinationals, international organisations, and other countries. Basically, in terms of international training, mostly is not our staff who attended…We had a seconded staff that benefitted from several international training. After gaining the knowledge and experience, this staff is no more at NAPTIP.

a. Limited Communication and Coordination

Lack of communication and coordination is one of the highly mentioned obstacles that influence the anti-trafficking policy implementation in Nigeria. The absence of communication

and coordination is due to the fragmented nature of NAPTIP officers and the relevant stakeholders' that are accountable in the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria. Several of the interviewed officers regarded the commitment in communicating and coordinating as interfering into other agency's jurisdiction. It seems that a cordial working relations are missing between NAPTIP officers and the relevant working organisations (especially the Nigeria police, immigration and other security agencies). Although all the organisations are from the federal level, the problem dealing with boundary is a crucial matter. In particular, many of the implementers, that is the informants from the anti-trafficking agency categorically cited:

> …you find each agency is claiming superiority over the other and most time if you have such there is bound to be a problem. Because the information they are supposed to give you they would not give you.

> Well, there are pitfalls, we only tell them we have an operation. We do not tell the place or person and whatever. By the time we start divulging all information, somebody might leak it to your suspect…

> We have some seconded staff with us, they believe NAPTIP is their baby.

> Some feel the job we are doing is theirs, and the same people that think why they would see such case intercept and bring to us… But we (NAPTIP) are the focal agency in the fight against human trafficking.

> Most cases were transferred to us from other agencies, they only bring victims, they have already compromised with the suspect and have let loose.

> There is something with Nigerian security agencies. Everyone wants to take the glory, want the government to know they are the ones working. They may refer a case for you to handle, but they will claim victory and superiority.

b. Call for a well-defined task

Although Nigeria has the policy that shapes human trafficking for the nation as a whole, a specific framework that can direct the actions of the NAPTIP and the working organisations is missing. This scenario has resulted in the lack of coordination due to limited understanding of the differences of the various organisations involved in fighting human trafficking. The situation has caused difficulty in coordination and the subsequent inability to follow through from policy formulation to policy implementation. There are instances at the time of the interview when the officers do not have the requisite knowledge of their task in handling human trafficking. Several of them were also uncertain about the specific responsibility of agencies involved in fighting the menace. In this context, it is near impossible to have an effective communication and coordination between the organisations due to lack of knowledge.

This compelling evidence illustrate the absence of a well-defined task and the lack of a sufficiently specified duty to the coordinating agencies in implementing the anti-trafficking

policy in Nigeria. In the absence of a well-defined task and ambiguous role a coordinated agencies relation between organisations becomes more difficult to achieve. Another key point is that the absence of a well-defined task has largely contributed to the crossing of boundaries of responsibility between relevant working agencies. Several facts from the informant interviewees demonstrated activities that obstructed and led to an undeclared battle for superiority among the working organisations. It seems that the absence of a well-defined task has undoubtfully resulted in many obstacles that impede the effectual implementation of the anti-trafficking policy in Nigeria.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

These obstacles that appeared as the study themes obviously have impacted the manner by which the anti-trafficking policy is implemented in Nigeria. The unstructured framework between the NAPTIP agency and the relevant working organisations were multifaceted, divisive and complicated. This multifaceted nature and division are the results of the implementers approach to implementation. Also, the absence of a well-defined task to each agency in the fight against human trafficking has disappointed the policy implementation process. The inter-agency coordination and communication among these agencies were weak. The complexities have led to many irregularities. These phenomena prompted different chains of obstacles, such as hoarding of information, jealousy, rivalry, and the inferiority-superiority complex among the policy implementers.

The findings show that enhancing communication and coordination in Nigeria lies for the most part in reinforcing institutional action for implementation. The inescapable and basic institutional issue in the anti-trafficking crusade is the significant communication and coordination between the focal agency (NAPTIP), and the working organisations. Indeed, implementing the anti-trafficking policy needs amongst other, a strong agency structure and a human trafficking program that can regularly include organisations from the relevant agencies to meet and to share experience. Other important criteria needed is a well-defined role for each related agency as well as having a clear explanation on task definition. In this way, harmonious relations can develop, which will eventually be resulted in a successful implementation of the anti-human trafficking policy in Nigeria.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

7. REFERENCES

[1] Donina, D., & Hasanefendic, S. (2019). Higher Education institutional governance reforms in the Netherlands, Portugal and Italy: A policy translation perspective addressing the homogeneous/heterogeneous dilemma. *Higher Education Quarterly,* 73(1), 29-44.

[2] Fahrner, M., & Klenk, C. (2018). Multilevel policy implementation: exploring organisational coordination – the case of the German Swimming Federation's national

training framework implementation. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(3), 549-566.

[3] Gerston, L. N. (2015). *Public Policy Making: Process and Principles*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

[4] Grindle, M.S. (2017). *Politics and Policy Implementation in the Third World*. New York: Princeton University Press.

[5] Haffar, M., Al-Karaghouli, W., Irani, Z., Djebarni, R., & Gbadamosi, G. (2019). The influence of individual readiness for change dimensions on quality management implementation in Algerian manufacturing organisations. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 207, 247-260.

[6] Hill, M., & Hupe, P. (2014). *Implementing Public Policy: An Introduction to the Study of Operational Governance*. London: SAGE Publications.

[7] Ikeora, M. (2016). The Role of African Traditional Religion and 'Juju' in Human Trafficking: Implications for Anti-trafficking. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 17(1), 1-18.

[8] Ikpeze, O. V., & Ifemeje, S. C. (2015). Dynamics of Trafficking in Nigerian Women and Globalization. *Journal of Policy & Globalization*, 39, 34-46.

[9] Kangiwa, A. G. (2015). The Socio–Economic Factors and Effects of Prostitution in Nigeria. *European Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 3(5), 70-83.

[10] Kim, H.-W., Park, T., Quiring, S., & Barrett, D. (2018). The anti-human trafficking collaboration model and serving victims: Providers' perspectives on the impact and experience. *Journal of evidence-informed social work*, 15(2), 186-203.

[11] May, I. (2017). *Bilateral Cooperation and Human Trafficking: Eradicating Modern Slavery between the United Kingdom and Nigeria*. (1st Ed.). Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.

[12] National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons and other Related Matters (2015). Data on Human Trafficking in Nigeria. Retrieved from https://www.naptip.gov.ng/ b?page_id=361.

[13] Nunez, G. G., & Meylaerts, R. (2017). *Translation and Public Policy: Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Case Studies*. London: Taylor & Francis.

[14] Oluwabuyi, A. A. (2015). Legal Response to Women Trafficking in Nigeria. *Frontiers of Legal Research,* 3(1), 1-12.

[15] Quah, J.S.T. (2016). *The Role of the Public Bureaucracy in Policy Implementation in Five ASEAN Countries*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

[16] Peters, B. G. (2018). The challenge of policy coordination. *Policy Design and Practice, 1*(1), 1-1.

[17] Plambech, S. (2017). Sex, deportation, and rescue: Economies of migration among Nigerian sex workers. *Feminist Economics,* 23(3), 134-159.

[18] Powell, M. (2018). *An analysis of policy implementation in the third world*. London: Routledge.

[19] Ruffing, E. (2015). Agencies between two worlds: information asymmetry in multilevel policy-making. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 22(8), 1109-1126.

[20] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2018). Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. Retrieved from http://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html

[21] U.S. Department of State. (2018). Trafficking in persons' report. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from https://www.state.gov/

[22] U.S. Department of State. (2008). Trafficking in persons' report. Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office. Retrieved from https://www.state.gov/

[23] Usman, U. M., Ariffin, R. N. R., & Othman, A. (2017). The Tripartite Trafficking. International *Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(11), 1047-1061.

[24] Usman, U. M., Ariffin, R. N. R., & Othman, A. B. H. (2018). Trafficking Twin Terror: Mysterious Madam and Voodoo Victimisation in the Case of Nigeria. *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, 8(1), 392-408.

[25] Yin, R. K. (2015). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: Guilford Publications.

[26] Usman Mikail Usman is a PhD candidate at the Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya, Malaysia. Usman's research interest is on human trafficking in Nigeria. His research area includes development studies, international relations, public policy and administration, politics and global issues. Prior to his higher degree journey, Usman is a teacher at Yusuf Maitama Sule University, Kano, Nigeria.

[27] Assoc. Prof. Dr. Raja Noriza Raja Ariffin is from the Department of Administrative Studies and Politics,

[28] Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya. She has published many articles in referred journals and papers in conference proceedings. Her research interest includes trafficking in persons, urban transportation, public policy and administration as well as planning and governance.

[29] Dr. Azmah Binti Haji Othman is a senior lecturer at the Department of Development Studies, Faculty of Economics and Administration, University of Malaya. Dr. Azmah is the Deputy Dean Higher Degree. Her research interest is in development economics, cooperative, international issues and climate change.