

Trailblazing Leadership: Navigating Human Trafficking, Political Models, and Border Security Challenges

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Abstract

Effective leadership is paramount in navigating the intricate landscape of human trafficking, political models, and border security challenges. In the face of these complex issues, a capable leader serves as a guiding force, steering initiatives towards comprehensive and sustainable solutions. This study delves into the pervasive issue of human trafficking, with a particular focus on its connection to challenges in border security. Drawing from an extensive review of literature spanning the past two decades, the study identifies key contributing factors to human trafficking, including poverty, corruption, porous borders, the abuse of the ECOWAS Protocol, and conflicts among security agencies. The research employs a qualitative approach to analyze 34 significant studies, revealing that human trafficking remains a critical concern, necessitating comprehensive intervention strategies. The study emphasizes the urgent need for leadership in strengthening border security through robust political models, infrastructure, advanced surveillance technology, and anti-corruption measures within security agencies. Additionally, fostering inter-agency collaboration, reevaluating the ECOWAS Protocol, and empowering communities through awareness campaigns and rehabilitation support are identified as crucial steps in combating human trafficking effectively. The article concludes by advocating for sustained commitment and collaboration among various stakeholders to address the challenges of border security as a way to curb human trafficking.

Keywords: *Leadership, Human Trafficking, Border, Political Models, Border Security.*

Introduction

Human trafficking is a global phenomenon that affects many countries, but in diverse ways. The developed countries are in the "demand side" of human trafficking, which is driven by cheap sex and cheap labour, while underdeveloped countries are in the "supply side" of human trafficking driven by poverty, unemployment, post-conflict economy, illiteracy, among others, which make them to lose the potential contributions of some of their youths trafficked to other countries (Rashid et al., 2020; Ali et al., 2020, Singh et al., 2019). It is estimated that over \$31 billion was the proceeds of human trafficking globally (Jatau, 2019). According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the statistics of the International Labor Organization (ILO), around 200,000 to 300,000 children are being trafficked each year for forced labour and sexual exploitation in West and Central Africa. In addition, according to a 2001 survey on child labour in West and Central Africa, about 330,000 children were employed in the Cocoa Agricultural Industry

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in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Nigeria. Out of 230,000 children working in Côte d'Ivoire, 12,000 had no family connection to the cocoa farm, or any other local farms in the country an alarming reality is that girls are more frequently the victims of child trafficking than boys.

Citing Aneke and Aga (2021) and Ali et al. (2020) and drawing on estimates from the International Labour Organization, it is reported that over 1.4 million Nigerians are ensnared in modern slavery, marking the highest figure in Africa. Among the victims, children constitute about one-third and are particularly susceptible to forced labor in agriculture, domestic servitude, and the commercial sex trade. Women and girls face a heightened risk, often trafficked for sexual exploitation within and beyond Nigeria's borders. The majority, 77%, endure strenuous labor in sectors like agriculture, construction, and domestic work, while 23% suffer sexual exploitation, including prostitution and forced marriage. Disturbingly, children make up one-third of the victims, exploited in the same industries.

Seventy percent of these victims are trafficked within Nigeria, while the remaining 30%, primarily women and girls, become targets for sexual exploitation in Europe and the Middle East. In 2016, human trafficking involving Nigerians yielded an average of about \$100 million (Okereke, 2018). Despite government initiatives like Operation Fire-For-Fire and Operation DECO to combat cross-border crime, human trafficking involving Nigerians persists, negatively impacting border security. The proliferation of over 160 illegal routes into Idiroko and Seme has led to a deterioration of trans-border criminal activities in Lagos and Ogun States, resulting in fatalities, such as the killing of five individuals in a single attack in 2021 (Oladipupo, 2021).

Data from NAPITIP (2021) reveals that from 2011 to 2021, 46% of the 818 victims of cross-border human trafficking rescued in Benin Republic were Nigerians, underscoring the vulnerability of Seme-Idirko borders. This poses significant safety concerns for individuals in these border communities and border posts, as perpetrators of trans-border human trafficking are linked to other transnational criminals, including arms traffickers and drug smugglers. Despite government efforts, such as the Passport to Safe Migration and Operation Fire-For-Fire in Nigerian border areas, the scourge of cross-border sex and labor trafficking persists. Instances include the rescue of 200 Nigerian girls heading to Ghana in Seme in 2018 (Nnadozie & Onyegbula, 2018) and the interception of more than 189 victims of cross-border human trafficking in 2022 (Alabi, 2022).

Human trafficking is Modern-day slavery and it has garnered significant attention from both local and global communities. This illicit activity has evolved into a profitable criminal enterprise, with Nigeria gaining recognition as one of the prominent African nations involved in human trafficking. As a result, this paper is geared towards the examination of the issue of human trafficking as well as the challenges of border security in Nigeria. The objective of this study is to classify and analyze the issue of human trafficking and criminality along the Nigerian border as well as identify the challenges of border security in Nigeria and its impact on human trafficking. A number of research have been conducted on human trafficking since the past few decades, but the term Human Trafficking is not universally defined until the past 2-decades. Therefore, the current research considered the data from past 20 years. To achieve this, the study adopts a documentary method of data collection where it considers and analyses a number of existing literature on human trafficking in Nigeria

Search Process

The process began by selecting the databases and scientific journals that would serve as the primary sources. The chosen journal archives have an effect on the quality of the relevant papers. This research utilised SCOPUS, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science among other databases. After categorising keywords in terms of population, intervention, comparison, outcomes, and context (PICOC), author considered research objective of the

current literature review. Then, using the terms "trends, difficulties, Challenges, Border Control, Human trafficking, was searched. The Author compiled the intervention part to collect data on numerous areas, including but not limited to Nigeria and Africa.

Screening Literature

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed, such as preferring articles and papers written in English above those written in languages like Mandarin and Spanish. This was done to reduce the potential for bias in the selection process. Then, publications were chosen that were both relevant to the study's central subject and were already available in English. Figure 3 shows the inclusion and exclusion of the literature. Initially keywords like human trafficking, border control and migrants were defined to find the articles from the databases. Inclusion criteria language and type of articles were also applied. Based on that a total number of 209 articles were found out of which 98 were from Scopus, 89 were from web of science and 22 were from science direct. Inclusion criteria of date, duplicate assessment. abstract assessment and full paper assessment were applied. Initially based on the subject date the articles were chosen from the past 20 years when the inclusion criteria were applied only 108 articles were left. These articles were further screened based on the duplicate assessment and 57 articles were found. After the two basic criteria assessment abstract was studied and articles were excluded from the cluster. Lastly full paper assessment was carried out and a total of 34 articles were selected. These articles were then coded and analyzed further.

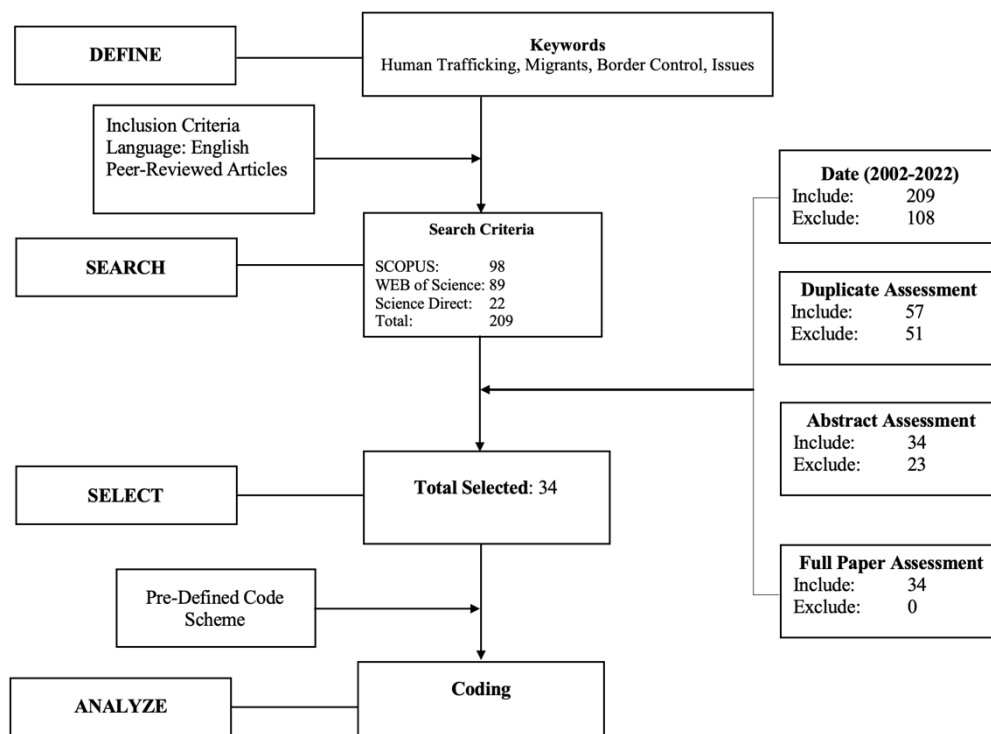


Figure 3: Literature Review Assessment Criteria

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Once literature was selected and screened the first Test was conducted which was descriptive statistics test based on that 38.2% of the articles had quantitative research which have primary and secondary data and was analyzed with empirical approach.

32.3% of the articles were qualitative and 29.5% of the articles were review articles. Table 1 shows the methodology of the articles.

Table 2

Methodology		
Type	Frequency	Percent
Qualitative	11	32.3
Quantitative	13	38.2
Review	10	29.5

Findings

From the review of the literature the most relevant studies were 34 highlighting the human trafficking issue in Nigeria. These studies were published in different journals and pass two decades, starting from 2006 till today the findings of the study showed that human trafficking is still the prevalent issue in Nigeria.

Poverty, poor governance, corruption, chronic armed conflict, armed banditry, porous border security, and transnational crimes all contribute to Nigeria's border security problems, encouraging criminal groups to facilitate irregular migration that will give access to serious and organized crime within the country's borders (Fayomi, 2009; Mobolaji & Alabi, 2017; Pandian et. al., 2021). This therefore, facilitates the production or provision of forged documents, bribery, concealment of financial transactions, provision of covert means of transportation, and laundering of criminal funds. When it comes to illegal commodities and humans trafficking, the same routes and methods are sometimes used. Given the porous nature of the Nigerian border and the fact that a significant part of border security entails securing income from import and export levies, this development is noteworthy. It is notable that the protection of national borders is a major concern for many nations (Aderibigbe & Olaleye, 2018; Mobolaji & Alabi, 2017).

An unforeseen result of political policies that open borders in the name of progress and a more peaceful global community is the spread of crime from one nation to another. Human trafficking, narcotics, and arms all seem to operate in the same place, but when their activities aren't monitored and controlled, it can compromise security, especially when human are illegally migrated over borders (Aderemi & Adewole, 2022). The table below shows the outcomes of the study.

Table 3

Summary of Outcomes of Nigerian Human Trafficking Studies	
Authors	Findings
Nwogu (2006)	The need for protection is a key dimension of trafficking-migration for the Nigerian migrant worker population.
Ngban, Maliki, and Asuquo (2009)	There is a significantly positive relationship between demographic variables and the perception of human trafficking in Nigeria.
Fayomi (2009)	In Nigeria, human trafficking has been increasingly attributed to the incidence of poverty worsened by the neo-imperialist capitalist pattern of development culture.
Geshinde and Elegbeleye (2011)	Among the push factors sustaining human trafficking in Nigeria, inability to meet basic needs is most potent.
Olujide, Oladele, and	In rural communities in Nigeria, rural dwellers have a negative

Akinbobola (2011)	perception of human trafficking but a low knowledge of it.
Akor (2011)	The trafficking of women has far-reaching socio-economic, health, and political consequences.
Enaikele and Olutayo (2011)	Human trafficking in Nigeria is a form of slavery and is linked to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.
Ndifon, Apori, and Ndifon (2012)	Human trafficking in Nigeria is a metaphor for human rights, crime, and security violations.
Duru and Ogonnaya (2012)	The institutions tasked with combating human trafficking in Nigeria are fundamentally weak.
Oluniyi (2012)	One of the main causes of human trafficking in Nigeria is the lack of awareness among youth about the dangers of human trafficking.
Onuoha (2014)	Baby 'factories and trafficking in Nigeria are emerging and growing sectors of human trafficking in Nigeria.
Kabo (2014)	There is a new form of human trafficking and slavery in Nigeria called "baby factories".
Osimen, Okor, and Ahmed (2014)	Child trafficking in Nigeria for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation is a widespread phenomenon.
Olubukola (2020)	Child trafficking in Nigeria is exacerbated by acute poverty, unemployment, ignorance, and an ineffective legal framework.
Jungudo (2014)	Northern Nigeria is vulnerable to human trafficking due to the Hajjiya traffickers recruiting victims for pilgrimages.
Njoku (2015)	Human trafficking creates an impression that the country is incapable of providing for the comfort of its citizens.
Alkali, Bukar, and Ansari (2015)	Child trafficking in Nigeria can be addressed by the role of Islamic and Christian religious institutions.
Manbe (2016)	Human trafficking in Nigeria is a critical problem that requires further ratification and implementation of international legislation.
Baarda (2016)	Voodoo is a coercive mechanism used by human traffickers in Nigeria for sexual exploitation abroad.
Osezua (2016)	The presence of classical patriarchy in high prevalence of polygyny, male-child preference, inheritance and succession systems has exacerbated inequality within the social structure in favor of the male child.
Iyanda (2016)	Globalization had a direct link to rising human trafficking in Nigeria.
Emanemua (2016)	In Nigeria, human trafficking involves the recruitment of teens as sex workers overseas.
Makinde (2016)	Baby factories in Nigeria exploit young girls with unwanted pregnancies and the practice is growing.
Oyebanji (2017)	In Nigeria, human trafficking is a major problem for young women who are forced into prostitution.
Aderibigbe and Olaleye (2018)	Community support service providers in Nigeria can help reduce human trafficking of young people by boosting their parents' economic status.

Adio-Moses et al. (2019)	Female trafficking is particularly vulnerable to health risks in Nigeria.
Chia (2019)	Human trafficking in Nigeria is hindered by pervasive poverty, unemployment, and greed.
Mary Agbo (2019)	The reason for women's involvement in trafficking is poverty and greed.
Olubukola (2020)	Some factors like family instability, feminization of poverty and gender inequality facilitate girls' trafficking in Nigeria.
Okpara (2020)	Media needs to embark on effective public sensitization in deconstructing human trafficking and its consequences in Nigerian society.
Ibanga (2020)	The novel exposes the degeneration perpetrated by unscrupulous adults and their inordinate quest to amass wealth.
Amadasun (2022)	Social work services for human trafficking survivors in Nigeria are mainly rehabilitation-driven and short-term-focused.
Azeez and Ogunbela (2021)	In Nigeria, factors such as poverty, weak institutions, and family greediness are identified as drivers of women trafficking.
Aderemi and Adewole (2022)	Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and a lack of stiffer policy by the government are factors in human trafficking in Nigeria.

The Challenges of Effective Border Security in Nigeria and its relationship with Human Trafficking in Nigeria

Even though efforts have been made to secure Nigeria border, it has been discovered that certain factors appear to pose a problem or challenge to effective border security in Nigeria.

1. **The Porous Nature of the Borders:** Numerous studies have highlighted the prevalent issue of porous borders in Nigeria, constituting a significant impediment to effective border security. The extensive nature of the Nigerian border, as noted by Menner (2014) and Gbemre (2016), is a key factor contributing to this challenge. The research indicates the presence of 147 irregular and 84 regular routes, with a notable emphasis on irregular routes for various movements (Maro, as cited in Akinyemi, 2013; Menner, 2014). Adams (2012) observed the existence of 1475 official border sites and an estimated 2000 unofficial sites across Nigeria's borders. Musa (2015) uncovered 250 concealed footprints from the Damaturu/Maiduguri axis, linking Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, unbeknownst to Nigerian Security Agencies. The porous state of Nigeria's border is discernible through the unconventional demarcation methods, including dried trees, oil drums, and tires, leading to a highly disorganized border infrastructure (Gbemre, 2016). These porous borders has facilitated the proliferation of illegal routes, giving rise to a range of transnational crimes, such as the smuggling of illicit goods, theft, terrorism, and other violent activities, ultimately contributing to the alarming incidence of human trafficking. The ease of movement along these unauthorized routes serves as a catalyst for criminal activities, underscoring the urgent need to address the vulnerabilities in Nigeria's border security to combat human trafficking effectively.

2. **Corruption:** The pervasive issue of corruption within Nigerian security agencies not only undermines effective border security but also serves as a catalyst for the alarming rise in human trafficking. As revealed by Akinyemi (2013), Nte (2011), and Gbemre (2016), the compromise of security personnel allows for the unchecked flow of illegal goods and individuals. Onuoha's (2013) observation that corruption is deeply ingrained and systemic in Nigeria is particularly troubling, as it extends to instances

where security agents, driven by illicit motives, facilitate cross-border arms trafficking. A poignant example in May 2023 involved the arrest of a senior customs official, accused of aiding Boko Haram insurgents in smuggling substantial arms and ammunition into Nigeria. Gbemre (2016) sheds light on the unsettling reality that some checkpoints, ostensibly in place for passport verification, serve as opportunities for extortion by corrupt security personnel. Furthermore, Hahonou's (2016) anthropological research indicates that traders, transporters, and passengers resort to informal payments to state agents to avoid taxation and expedite procedures, revealing the pervasive influence of corruption in border operations. In the context of human trafficking, this endemic corruption within security agencies amplifies the vulnerability of individuals along border routes. The compromised checkpoints and security personnel create an environment where traffickers exploit the system, using bribery to facilitate the illicit movement of people across borders. The very institutions tasked with safeguarding against human trafficking become complicit in perpetuating this heinous crime, highlighting the urgent need to address corruption as an integral part of comprehensive efforts to combat human trafficking in Nigeria.

3. Issue of Facilities & Logistics: The inadequacy of facilities and logistical support poses a significant challenge to effective border security in Nigeria, a concern that is intricately linked to the issue of human trafficking. As highlighted by Akpomera & Omoyibo (2013), Akinyemi (2014), Danfulani (2014), and Bearzotti et al. (2015), reported cases underscore the deficiency in operational facilities, including substandard border barracks, office spaces, insufficient communication and technological gadgets, and a scarcity of patrol vehicles. Lamptey (2015) emphasizes that the efficacy of border security officials is compromised by these logistic deficiencies and poor government remuneration, creating fertile ground for corruption to take root. The interplay of inadequate facilities and logistical support not only hampers the overall effectiveness of border security but also directly contributes to vulnerabilities that facilitate human trafficking. In the context of human trafficking, the lack of proper infrastructure and resources weakens the ability of border security agencies to monitor and control border areas effectively. Traffickers exploit these operational gaps, taking advantage of inadequate patrol coverage and substandard facilities to maneuver individuals across borders illicitly. The absence of modern communication and technological tools further limits the timely exchange of information and coordination among security agencies, allowing traffickers to operate with increased impunity.

4. Abuse of ECOWAS Protocol: The abuse of the ECOWAS Protocol on the free movement of persons and goods, initially designed to spur regional development, has emerged as a grave concern, exacerbating the issue of human trafficking in Nigeria. While the protocol seeks to facilitate the movement of citizens among member states, it has become a tool exploited by criminals and terrorists for the illicit transportation of goods and individuals, as highlighted by Temisan (2015). This misuse of the protocol has created a conducive environment for the infiltration of illegal activities, particularly human trafficking, into Nigeria. Akinyemi (2013) underscores that the flexibility of the protocol allows criminals to traverse borders under the guise of adhering to its provisions, providing traffickers with an avenue to engage in cross-border activities without raising suspicion. Unfortunately, the abuse of the ECOWAS protocol has transformed borders into porous entry points for individuals without proper identification, as the free movement initiative has been manipulated to imply entry without valid documentation. Opanike and Aduloju (2015) emphasize the inadequacies of the protocol, noting that the absence of effective mechanisms for checking illegal immigration within ECOWAS has allowed individuals engaged in nefarious activities, including human trafficking, to exploit this opportunity. The flexible nature of the protocol, coupled with its poor implementation, has inadvertently facilitated the movement of traffickers across borders, enabling the exploitation and trafficking of individuals without proper documentation.

Consequently, the lax monitoring and enforcement of the ECOWAS Protocol have significantly contributed to the escalation of human trafficking in Nigeria and other West African regions, as evidenced by Temisan (2015) and Opanike & Aduloju (2015). Addressing this challenge is imperative to fortify efforts against human trafficking, requiring a comprehensive review and enhancement of the protocol's implementation to ensure that it aligns with its original intent of fostering regional development without inadvertently promoting illicit activities.

5. **Conflict/ inadequate Co-operations Among Security Agencies:** The conflict and inadequate cooperation among security agencies, as highlighted by Adam (2012), not only undermine border security in Nigeria but also contribute significantly to the issue of human trafficking. The absence of integrated security efforts, as noted by Adam, creates a favorable environment for criminal smuggling and other illicit networks to thrive. This lack of synergy is particularly pronounced in the poor cooperation and coordination between Nigerian security agents and their counterparts in neighboring countries, as documented by Idowu (2014), Babatunde (2009), Temisan (2015), and Menner (2014). Temisan (2015) specifically points to the deficient cooperation between key security agencies, mainly the Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) and the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), in joint patrol arrangements at the borders. Despite the multinational Joint Task Force's efforts to enhance security, collaboration, coordination, and cooperation issues persist among the security agencies of different countries (Menner, 2014). This breakdown in joint efforts allows human traffickers to exploit the gaps in security measures. The conflicts and poor cooperation stem from suspicions, challenges in information and intelligence sharing, disagreements on standards, and ad-hoc operations in joint patrols, as outlined by Babatunde (2009) and Idowu (2014). These issues not only compromise the effectiveness of security operations but also create opportunities for traffickers to exploit vulnerabilities along the borders. In the context of human trafficking, the lack of seamless cooperation and coordination among security agencies allows traffickers to navigate borders more easily, taking advantage of the discord to carry out their illicit activities.

Conclusion

The enduring scourge of human trafficking in Nigeria is inextricably linked to the multifaceted vulnerabilities plaguing its border security apparatus. The nation's vast and porous borders, characterized by an abundance of informal crossings and a dearth of robust infrastructure, offer a fertile ground for nefarious activities, including the illicit movement of human beings. This inherent vulnerability is further exacerbated by the insidious tentacles of corruption within security agencies, which provide a permissive environment for criminal networks to operate with impunity. Additionally, the inadequate resources and infrastructure allocated to border patrol personnel significantly hamper their ability to effectively monitor and control these extensive frontiers. Furthermore, the abuse of the ECOWAS free movement protocol creates exploitable loopholes that traffickers readily utilize to ferry victims across borders undetected. Finally, the lack of seamless cooperation and coordinated efforts among security agencies, both within Nigeria and with neighboring countries, leaves exploitable gaps that traffickers adeptly navigate. The cumulative consequence of these challenges is dire: shattered lives, stolen dreams, and a flagrant violation of fundamental human rights. Ignoring these vulnerabilities is not an option. Addressing the issue of human trafficking in Nigeria necessitates a multifaceted approach that systematically tackles each element of this complex problem. It demands:

1. **Strengthening Border Security:** A significant investment in robust infrastructure is crucial, encompassing the modernization of border posts, deployment of advanced surveillance technology, establishment of well-equipped and adequately staffed patrol

units, and definitive demarcation of borders. Concomitantly, enhancing the capacity of security personnel through comprehensive training and provision of sufficient resources is essential. Most importantly, combating corruption within security agencies through stringent anti-corruption measures, the implementation of transparent procedures, and the establishment of robust accountability mechanisms are non-negotiable.

2. **Fostering inter-agency collaboration:** Seamless communication and intelligence sharing among security agencies within Nigeria and at regional levels must be prioritized. A critical reevaluation of the ECOWAS Protocol is needed, with the implementation of stricter border controls and rigorous verification processes to prevent abuse of the free movement provisions. Building strong partnerships with neighboring countries and international organizations will be instrumental in dismantling cross-border trafficking networks.

3. **Empowering communities:** Raising awareness about the dangers of human trafficking and equipping communities with the tools to report suspicious activity is crucial. Establishing comprehensive rehabilitation centers for survivors, providing them with physical and psychological support, and empowering them to rebuild their lives are moral imperatives. Finally, addressing poverty and creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for vulnerable individuals can significantly reduce their susceptibility to trafficking. The fight against human trafficking in Nigeria requires unwavering commitment from all stakeholders: the government, security agencies, civil society organizations, and every individual. Only through sustained collaboration, unwavering resolve, and the strategic implementation of multifaceted interventions can we dismantle the intricate networks that exploit and enslave our fellow human beings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the funding from the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia for Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS/1/2023/SS10/USM/01/2).

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