



Assessment of NAPTIP Communication Strategies in Curtailing Gender-Based Human Trafficking in FCT Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Background: Over the years, human trafficking has been a menace in Nigeria. Most worrisome is the gender dynamism involved therein. Gender-based-dynamism plays a significant role in human trafficking, and the impact of the menace on the victims is believed to differ based on the gender involved.

Objectives: This study investigated the effectiveness of communication strategies in raising awareness about gender-specific vulnerabilities to human trafficking and the effect of targeted communication interventions on empowering potential female victims and survivors of human trafficking in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Method: A mixed research method was adopted. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data, and a Key Informant Interview (KII) guide was used to obtain qualitative data. The population of the study was three Million, Eight Hundred and Forty-Thousand (3,840,000). A sample of 413 respondents was used for the study which was drawn using Wimmer and Dominick (2013) online sample size determination calculator and over-sampling techniques as recommended by Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001, p.46). A multistage sampling technique was adopted in distributing the study's structured questionnaires across six area councils of Abuja. In contrast, the Key Informant Interview, (KII) guide was used to collect qualitative data from officials of NAPTIP in the Abuja headquarters office across six departments of the agency. This was done using Creswell's (2014) purposive sampling techniques which involves selecting participants that the researcher believes would contribute meaningfully to the study's analysis. The study was anchored on feminism theory.

Result: Findings indicated that: TV talk shows, town hall meetings, and social media outreach have significantly increased the impact of NAPTIP's campaigns. The study also found that residents of Abuja believed that NAPTIP's communication strategies had reached vulnerable populations even though the effect was minimal.

Conclusion: It concludes that NAPTIP's communication strategies have influenced Abuja residents' perceptions and attitudes toward gender roles in human trafficking. The respondents perception is that communication strategies have arose self-awareness, consciousness, actions and precautions in them. The residents of Abuja also believed that NAPTIP's communication strategies have reached vulnerable populations to a minimal extent.

Unique Contribution: TV, (talk shows, Conversation with the DG), town hall meetings, and social media outreach have significantly improved the impact of NAPTIP's campaigns, while there's a need to optimize the Help App and radio strategies to increase their effectiveness in combating gender-based human trafficking in Abuja. NAPTIP needs to reassess and enhance its communication approaches to better engage and protect the gender at higher risk of human trafficking in Abuja, Nigeria.

Key Recommendation: The study recommends that NAPTIP should reassess its communication approaches to better engage and protect the gender at higher risk of human trafficking in Abuja.

Key Words: Communication Strategies, Gender-based human trafficking, TV Talk-shows, social media, town hall meetings.



INTRODUCTION:

Human trafficking has been a problem in Nigeria (Nwafor, et al., 2024). Ignorance has been the major factor that influence victims 'vulnerability. Communication can play significant role in addressing the problem of ignorance which predisposes victims to vulnerability (Obande-Ogbuinya, et. al., 2024). Perhaps the female gender seem to be the most victim of trafficking (Muoneke, & Nwafor, 2024). Meanwhile, gender-based or gender perspective of human trafficking seems often neglected in Nigeria irrespective of the affected gender. Effective communication strategies can however, raise awareness and make clear the risks and realities of trafficking, particularly for women and girls who are disproportionately affected. According to Okeshola and Adenugba, (2018), public information campaigns, utilising various media channels, can educate communities about the tactics used by traffickers and the vulnerabilities that make women and girls more susceptible to exploitation. They further added that these campaigns can also be used to challenge societal norms and beliefs that contribute to gender inequality, which is often at the root of trafficking vulnerabilities (Nwafor, et al., 2024).

In addition, communication has a crucial role in promoting discourse among many stakeholders, such as local communities, NGOs, and government organisations. Gender-sensitive and more comprehensive strategies to combat human trafficking may result from this conversation. Policymakers and practitioners can learn a great deal about the unique difficulties that sufferers and potential victims face and include women and girls in the discourse (Adepoju, 2019). The development of more potent preventive and protective measures that cater to the particular requirements of women and girls can be aided by this participatory approach. Communication roles span beyond supporting survivors and facilitating their reintegration into society to promoting narratives that destigmatise trafficking experiences and emphasize the resilience of survivors. Olayiwola and Olayiwola, (2019) stated that communication can be leveraged on to create a more supportive environment for those who have been trafficked. Additionally, targeted communication efforts can connect survivors with available support services and resources, empowering them to rebuild their lives and reduce the risk of re-trafficking. While Olofinbiyi et al., (2021) were of the view that effective communication strategies can also encourage communities to be more accepting of returning survivors, addressing the social barriers that often hinder successful reintegration.

On the other hand, human trafficking remains a significant global issue, with Nigeria being a major source, transit, and destination country for victims according to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020). The anatomy of gender place in human trafficking in Nigeria reveals a complex interplay of socio-economic, cultural, and political factors that unduly affect women and girls. Nigeria has consistently ranked among the top countries of origin for trafficking victims in Europe, with women and girls comprising the majority of those trafficked (UNODC, 2020). The gendered nature of human trafficking in Nigeria is deeply rooted in societal norms, economic disparities, and cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality. For instance, there is stereotyped headship of male gender and assumed person of authority in some Nigerian culture placing men on the must providing end for the family thereby increasing their vulnerability to labour traffickers. Today, Nigeria youths especially the young boys are taking the decisions to



leave the shore of Nigeria for any country at all without considering the possible negative fate awaiting them in such a country (the JAPA SYNDROME) to maintain their status as the men of the house.

Similarly, poverty and lack of economic opportunities are primary drivers of human trafficking in Nigeria, particularly affecting women and girls (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). Limited access to education and employment opportunities pushes many females into vulnerable situations, making them easy targets for traffickers who promise better lives abroad. Again, Igbelina-Igbokwe, (2019) added that whenever there is a financial crisis in a family, girl-child pay the most pathetic price of being withdrawn from school for their male siblings to continue. While some may have the opportunity to go back to school later in the future others may never have any opportunity again in their lifetime, limiting their future financial capacities and productiveness to society. Aibangbe, (2015) believes that cultural practices such as child marriage and domestic servitude also contribute to the vulnerability of girls and young women to trafficking. Child marriage or infant mothers are culturally entrenched whereas these practices reinforce gender roles that limit women's autonomy and economic independence, increasing their susceptibility to exploitation.

Moreover, Adepoju, (2019) observed that there is demand for sexual services in destination countries, coupled with the commodification of women's bodies, fuels the trafficking of Nigerian women and girls for sexual exploitation. The stigma attached to sexual exploitation, which frequently keeps victims from getting assistance or reintegrating into their communities after their return, exacerbates this gendered feature of trafficking. Nigerian women and girls are trafficked from rural to urban areas for domestic employment and sexual exploitation, raising serious concerns about internal trafficking within the country (Olayiwola & Olayiwola, 2019). Although it frequently goes unnoticed, the internal aspect of human trafficking has serious repercussions for both the victims and their communities. Efforts to combat human trafficking in Nigeria have increased in recent years, with the government and NGOs implementing various prevention, protection, and prosecution measures. However, these efforts often fail to adequately address the gendered nature of trafficking, focusing primarily on law enforcement rather than addressing root causes (Elabor-Idemudia, 2018). The gender perspective of human trafficking is a challenge particularly since Nigeria is a source, transit, and destination country of trafficking victims especially as women and girls are disproportionately affected. According to (UNODC, 2020), 75% of detected trafficking victims in West Africa are women and girls, with Nigeria being a key country of origin. In Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria, the problem is particularly acute, with NAPTIP reporting that 75.7% of the 1,076 trafficking cases they handled in 2018 involved female victims (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). NAPTIP rescued victims of human trafficking in 2023 is 325, while male victims were 52 which is 16% female victims were 273 accounting for 84% (NAPTIP, 2023).

Consequently, legal reforms like the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act of 2015, provided a framework for addressing all matters of human trafficking, the gender-specific aspects of this crime were neglected whereas communication strategies may play a vital role in the prevention, protection, and rehabilitation efforts, yet there is a lack of comprehensive research on its effectiveness in curtailing the gender perspectives of human trafficking, particularly in Abuja. The



city's rapid urbanization and diverse population from different backgrounds make it a microcosm of Nigeria's trafficking challenges, with internal trafficking from rural areas into the city compounding the issue. Jegede, et al (2019) which investigated gendered inequality and human trafficking in Nigeria: a preliminary survey of Lagos and Ogun states; Okojie, (2019) who studied gender and migration experiences of trafficked women in Nigeria; Omorodion, (2020) equally studied sexual exploitation of children and young people in Nigeria: A multi-level analysis of the risk factors and Ogunnowo, and Onwuka, (2021) who looked into gender dimensions of human trafficking in Nigeria: an analysis of trends and patterns. None of the scholars considered communication approaches as a measure to curtail human trafficking, especially in Abuja, where traditional media, social media, and community-based communication channels coexist. Therefore, there is a need to determine which communication strategies (*Radio jingle/drama, social media, Help App, TV Programmes, Townhall meeting*) are most effective in raising awareness, changing attitudes, and promoting behaviour change among different demographic groups to curtail human trafficking. This research gap informed the decision to investigate evidence-based, gender-sensitive communication strategies that could significantly impact the prevention of human trafficking and the protection of vulnerable women and girls in Abuja, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study asked the following Questions to guide the study

1. How effective are the NAPTIP communication strategies in raising awareness about gender-specific vulnerabilities to human trafficking in FCT Abuja, Nigeria.
2. What are the effects of targeted NAPTIP communication interventions on empowering potential female victims and survivors of human trafficking?

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies are systematic attempts to shape perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors in pursuit of organizational or personal objectives through the planned use of messages and media channels, (Hallahan, et al 2007 in Eze, Ogande, & Akpede, 2024). Zerfass, and Holtzhausen, (2014) stated that communication strategies refer to the planned and purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals. By way of explanation, communication strategy could be seen as a plan for delivering a message to the previously identified target audience. Every proper communication plan should identify the audience, the message, and the channels via which the message should be delivered. The communication strategies could be non-verbal, verbal, and visual. In the case of human trafficking, communication strategy should promote knowledge and awareness of TIP and its negative impact. It has to discuss/address TIP as a universal crime against humanity that has to be reported and/or advocate for more support to curb the practice-highlights the need for protection assistance mechanisms.



Gender Perspectives

This is described as the ability to detect if and when men, women, boys and girls are being affected differently by a situation due to their gender (WHO, 2017). It is the characteristics of being women, men, girls and boys as they are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Applying a gender perspective acts as a force multiplier and boosts situational awareness as it incorporates and accounts for diverse views and issues and helps to complement the full operational picture.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is seen as “a denial of freedom and human dignity that results in serious harm to individuals. It can also be explained to mean the processes through which individuals are placed or maintained in an exploitative situation for economic gain.” (OHCHR, 2014). Therefore, this study adopted the definition provided by the UNODC, (2004) which stated that human trafficking means “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, using threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, for exploitation” (UNODC, 2004).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human trafficking was first linked to prehistoric societies when forced labour and slavery were widespread customs. However, the late 20th century saw the emergence of the contemporary understanding of human trafficking as a global concern. Indentured servitude, forced marriages, and the transatlantic slave trade were among the historical types of human exploitation that paved the way for what is now known as human trafficking (Winterdyk & Jones, 2018). Though the dynamics and techniques of these activities varied, they were similar to modern human trafficking in that they exploited weak people for financial gain or other objectives. Global economic shifts, technical developments, and evolving societal standards have had an impact on the slow but steady transition from past forms of exploitation to contemporary human trafficking. Human trafficking flourished in the post-World War II era due to increased international migration and national economic inequality (Modestino, 2019). Human migration across borders, both willingly and unwillingly, was made easier with the advent of globalization in the late 20th century. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children was established in 2000 as a result of increased international awareness of these issues and the need to address human trafficking as a global issue. This protocol established the first definition of human trafficking that has been accepted globally (Gallagher, 2015).

In the Nigerian context, gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping the landscape of human trafficking. Women and girls are disproportionately affected, accounting for the majority of trafficking victims, particularly in cases of sexual exploitation and domestic servitude (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). Economic disparities between genders in Nigeria is a significant factor deep-rooted into societal norms and cultural practices that often limit women’s access to education, employment, and decision-making power. The prevalence of patriarchal structures in Nigerian society contributes to the objectification and commodification of women’s bodies, making them



more susceptible to exploitation by traffickers who capitalize on these existing inequalities (Adepoju, 2019). Gender-based violence (GBV) remains a pressing issue in Nigerian society. A study by Oladejo et al. (2019) found that 28% of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical violence since age 15. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified this issue, with reports of increased incest abuses and domestic violence during lockdowns (Onyango et al., 2021).

The gender dynamics of human trafficking in Nigeria are further complicated by the intersection of poverty, lack of opportunities, and traditional beliefs. According to UNESCO (2020), the literacy rate for adult women in Nigeria is 59.3%, compared to 70.9% for men. The gender gap in labour force participation was estimated at 13.4% in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). Fapohunda (2017) reports that women earn approximately 77% of what men earn for similar work. Similarly, occupational segregation, access to credit (with collateral as lands or house) and financial services, land ownership and property rights are all issues around gender in Nigeria. Thus, many families, especially in rural areas, may view the trafficking of their daughters as a means of economic survival or advancement, unknowingly exposing them to severe exploitation especially when having single female daughters living abroad is a thing of pride (Olayiwola & Olayiwola, 2019).

To change the dynamics of gender vulnerability in Nigeria is to instil communication strategies that would effectively curtail gender-based human trafficking through continuous persuasion for attitudinal changes in Nigeria. The way to go may include mass media campaigns, community-based dialogues, social media outreach, educational programmes, interpersonal communication, and storytelling on a flashback memory of deliberate molestations and inhuman actions carried against Africans (Blacks) during racial discrimination and negro-hood movement. Mass media campaigns using the above channels with print media cartoon caricature would reach and have impact on a wide audience while raising awareness about trafficking risks and challenging harmful gender norms (Okeshola & Adenugba, 2018). Community-based dialogues facilitate direct engagement with local populations, allowing for culturally sensitive discussions about trafficking and gender issues. Social media outreach can be used to target younger demographics, providing information and resources through platforms they frequently use. Educational programmes in schools and community centers can equip potential victims with knowledge and skills to recognize and avoid trafficking situations (Adepoju, 2019). By this segmentation of the audience backed by comprehensive communication strategies, the multifaceted nature of gender-based human trafficking would be prevented while protection efforts and reintegrating victims should continue over a long period (Olofinbiyi et al., 2021).

To utilise communication strategies, analysing media effects and how different forms of communication influence perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles and their relationship to human trafficking in Abuja would be critical in highlighting the role media play in shaping public opinion. Though the media effect may differ from one medium to another, however, studies have shown that the combination of these communication strategies, when used effectively guarantees behavioural change after a long period and can challenge harmful gender norms through consistent awareness raising about the risks of human trafficking (Okorie, 2014). Mass media have a broad reach and can significantly influence societal norms by reinforcing or challenging existing gender



stereotypes. Social media, with its interactive nature, allows for real-time engagement and dissemination of information, often sparking discussions that can lead to shifts in attitudes. Interpersonal communication, like community dialogues and peer education, provides a more personal approach, fostering deeper understanding and behavioural change. Thus, Akor, (2015) believe that evaluating the impact of targeted communication interventions on empowering potential female victims and survivors of human trafficking in Abuja is essential for assessing its effectiveness in prevention, protection, and reintegration efforts.

EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Some studies have been done in the area of human trafficking. Akor, (2011) investigated Trafficking of Women in Nigeria: Causes, Consequences and the way forward. The study identified several casual factors of human trafficking. It further revealed that of over 700,000 African victims of trafficking, Nigeria account for 70 percent trafficked to Italy alone. Fighting the menace requires a coordinated and concerted push from all stakeholders. The paper presents the causes and consequences of the trafficking of women from Nigeria to America and Europe. Empirical evidence indicates that the activities of traffickers, corrupt embassy officials, the country's porous borders, poverty, refusal of victims to expose traffickers, delay in prosecuting apprehended culprits and biting youth unemployment have "conspired" to undermine the battle against the illicit trade. The paper makes far-reaching recommendations about how to mitigate the identified obstacles. Akor 2011 only focus on trafficking in women, which is very far smaller in scope compare to the current studies. While Akor is interested in looking at causes, consequences and way forward, this current study is looking at how communication strategy can become a remedial tool in enhancing the work of NAPTIP.

Similarly, Stockl, et al (2021) investigated human trafficking and violence: Findings from the largest global dataset of trafficking survivors. The paper aimed at describing documented cases of violence amongst persons identified as victims of trafficking, examine associated factors throughout the trafficking cycle and explore prevalence of abuse in different labour sectors. The study used anti-trafficking case-management tool and utilized the cases of 10,369 trafficked victims. The prevalence of reported violence during human trafficking included: 54% physical and/or sexual violence; 50% physical violence; and 15% sexual violence, with 25% of women reporting sexual violence. Experiences of physical and sexual violence amongst trafficked victims were significantly higher amongst women and girls (AOR 2.48 (CI: 2.01,3.06)), individuals in sexual exploitation (AOR 2.08 (CI: 1.22,3.54)) and those experiencing other forms of abuse and deprivation, such as threats (AOR 2.89 (CI: 2.10,3.98)) and forced use of alcohol and drugs (AOR 2.37 (CI: 1.08,5.21)). Abuse was significantly lower amongst individuals trafficked internationally (AOR 0.36 (CI: 0.19,0.68)) and those using forged documents (AOR 0.64 (CI: 0.44,0.93)). Violence was frequently associated with trafficking into manufacturing, agriculture and begging (> 55%). The study concluded that an analysis of the world's largest data set on trafficking victims indicates that violence is indeed prevalent and gendered based in Nigeria. This research is similar to that of Stockl et al 2021 on subject of human trafficking but differ by location, methodology and area of focus.



Also, the World Bank and IOM (2022) presented a research report entitled Economic Shocks and Human Trafficking Risks: Evidence from IOM's Victims of Human Trafficking Database. The study aimed at answering two analytical questions, first, do economic shocks increase the number of detected human trafficking cases from and within countries of origin? Second, can good institutions—ones that can enable adherence to the rule of law and the provision of access to justice or anti-trafficking policies in particular—and social assistance moderate the possible negative effects of economic shocks on trafficking cases in origin countries? UNODC, (2020) 65% of trafficked victims are within their countries and out of 70% cases, 20% cases are internal trafficking cases from one's country of origin. Rule of law, access to justice, anti-trafficking policies and acts needed to be strengthened to weaken the links. The main finding is that economic shocks are significant risk factors that increase vulnerability to human trafficking. The study concluded that border closures in the midst of an economic shock could make migrants in some contexts more likely to seek irregular migration routes, which are likely to increase vulnerability to trafficking. Human trafficking will remain a major risk even after COVID-19 is brought under control, which merits high levels of policy attention and resources. This research is similar to that of World Bank but while World Bank focus on the relationship between economic shock and human trafficking, the current study is interested at looking into communication challenges around NAPTIP.

Theoretical Frameworks

The study was anchored on feminism theory. Feminism theory was championed by the write up of Mary Wollstonecraft titled “a vindication of the rights of woman” in 1792 marking a foundational moment for feminist thought. Feminist theory as an academic framework began to take shape in the mid-20th century, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, with scholars like Simone de Beauvoir, who authored “*The Second Sex*” in 1949, and later figures like Betty Friedan, whose book “*The Feminine Mystique*” (1963) catalyzed the second wave of feminism. Feminist theory critically examines the ways in which gender, particularly the experience of women, is constructed and maintained within societies. It argues that gender is not simply a natural biological distinction but a socially constructed category that has been used historically to subordinate women and privilege men. Feminists assert that this gender-based inequality is perpetuated through various institutions, including the family, the workplace, politics, and education, all of which are influenced by patriarchal norms.

Logically, the feminist theory is most suited for this study because it highlights clearly the issues of gender perspectives by describing how a particular gender is being affected differently by a situation due to their gender (WHO, 2017). Thus, the underpinning argument of feminist theory holds the views of critiquing and analyzing the power dynamics inherent in gender relations. It draws on empirical evidence and theoretical analysis to demonstrate how gender inequalities are maintained and reproduced by emphasizing how societal structures contribute to gender oppression. It thereby advocates for social, political, and economic equality, feminist theory provides a framework for understanding and challenging the systemic nature of gender-based discrimination, making it a powerful tool for both critique and social change.



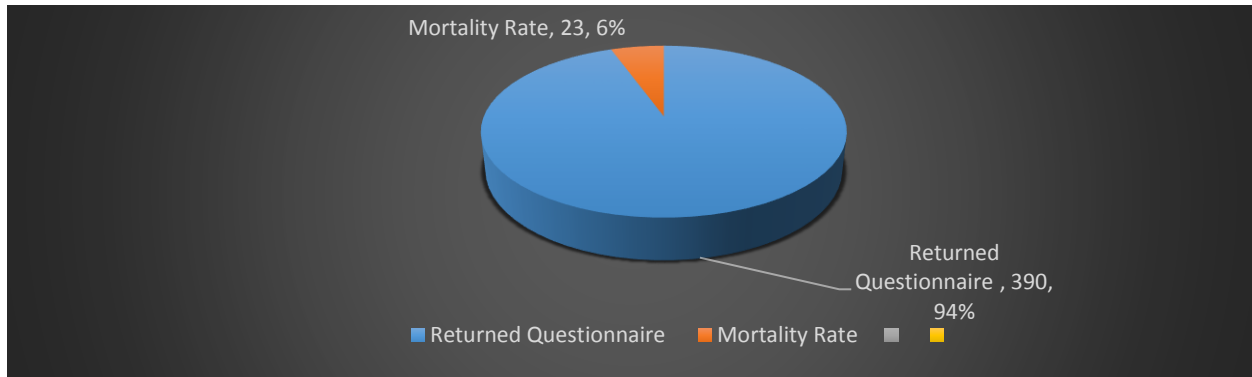
METHOD

The study adopted a mixed-method research technique whereby both the quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection were utilized. Abuja's population according to Nigeria Metro Area Population 2023, is three Million, Eight Hundred and Forty-Thousand (3,840,000) (See www.macrotrends.net). A sample of 413 respondents was used for the study which was drawn using Wimmer and Dominick (2013) online sample size determination calculator and over-sampling techniques as recommended by Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001, p.46). A multistage sampling technique with specification to clustering and simple random techniques were employed while distributing the study's structured questionnaires across six area councils of Abuja. The techniques offer the researchers the opportunity to randomly select samples from clusters within the given population. In contrast, Key Informant Interview, (KII) guide was used to collect qualitative data from officials of NAPTIP in the Abuja headquarters office. Six departments of the agency (NAPTIP) were logically and carefully selected for interview using Creswell's (2014) purposive sampling techniques which involves selecting participants that the researcher believes will contribute something meaningful to the study's analysis. Thus, (Public Enlightenment Department; Legal Department; Investigation Department; Information Communication Technology/Intelligence Department; Violence Against Person's Prohibition Department (VAPP), and Rapid Response Squad (RRS) Department) were selected.

In all the departments visited, the heads of the departments who were referred to as directors of departments by NAPTIP were interviewed except in VAPP and investigation where the directors instructed their deputies to grant the interview based on the busy schedules and availability within the period of the visits. Both instruments were self-administered to respondents in Abuja who are either NAPTIP officials or residents of the municipal areas selected for the study. The decision to choosing a mixed method is in line with Creswell and Creswell, (2017) line of thought where they stated that a mixed method approach provides more understanding of the research problem than using either quantitative or qualitative methods alone. This view is well supported by Tashakkori and Teddlie, (2010) who also agree that combining statistical trends from quantitative data and details of personal experience from qualitative data helps validate findings across data sources and provide a more comprehensive perspective. Thus, validity is strengthened if quantitative and qualitative data provide corroborating evidence.

RESULT

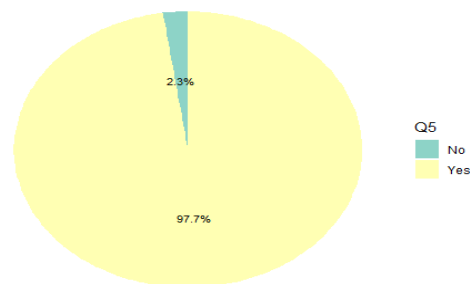
Figure 1: Distribution Analysis of the Study Quantitative Data



Source, field work 2024

Figure 1 shows the analysis of the response rate for this study which reviews that the total administered questionnaire was 413, the well completed and returned questionnaire was 390, highlighting mortality rate of 23 questionnaire. This implies that the mortality rate cannot undermine the effectiveness of data collection efforts since the well completed returned questionnaire stood at 94.4%, it is adjudged to have sufficient data coverage for a conclusive analysis of this study.

Figure 2: Data Presentation on Respondents Responses on Communication Strategies used in Curtailing Gender Perspective Issues in Human Trafficking in Abuja, Nigeria



Source, field work 2024

Figure 3: Respondents Access to Mass Media of Communication

Based on the data provided in Figure 4.2, nearly all respondents (97.7%) have access to mass media platforms such as radio, TV, newspapers, or social media outlets, while only a small fraction (2.31%) said they do not have access to mass media of communication. This high level of media access suggests that communication strategies of the (NAPTIP) are most likely to have reached the majority of the population in FCT, Abuja. The data indicates that a significant majority of individuals in FCT, Abuja have access to mass media platforms, which is crucial for the



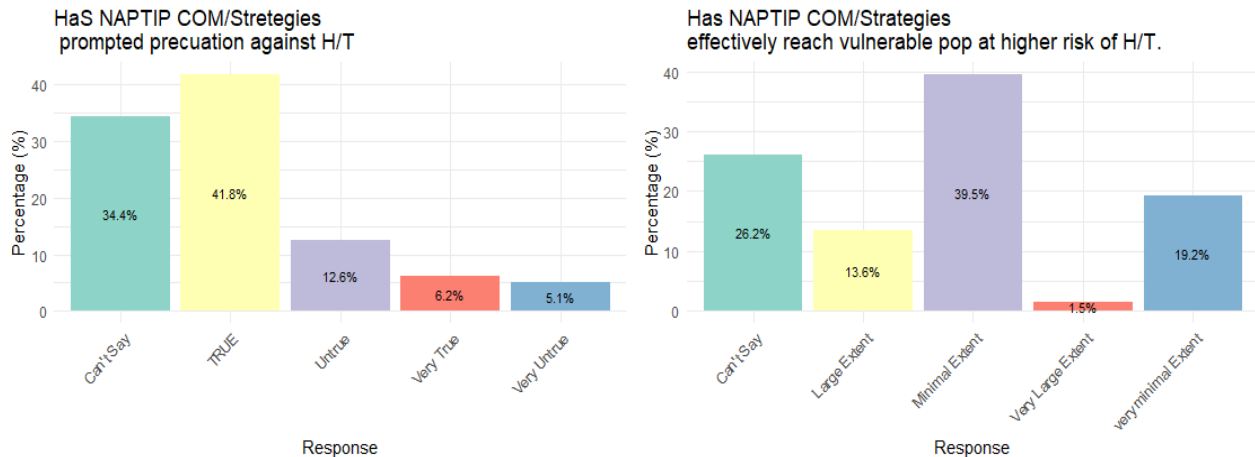
effectiveness of NAPTIP’s anti-human trafficking campaigns. Thus, with 97.7% of respondents are able to access media channels such as radio, TV, newspapers, and social media, NAPTIP’s communication strategies are well-positioned to reach and potentially influence the target audience.

Table 2: Percentage Rating of the Effectiveness of NAPTIP Communication Strategies

Rating	Radio/social media	Help App	Radio	Social media	TV	Town Hall Meeting	Percent (%)
Effective	2.01	0	17.43	24.83	50.34	5.37	100
Extremely Effective	0	0	0	50	0	50	100
Ineffective	0	0	19.35	30.11	43.01	7.53	100
Extremely Ineffective	20	0	20	0	20	20	100
Can’t Say	0	2.36	14.96	40.16	36.22	6.3	100

Source, field work 2024

The data reveals that social media, townhall meeting and Tv are perceived as the most effective communication strategies by respondents, with 74.83% (cumulatively) rating social media as effective, town hall meeting was cumulatively rated as 55.37% and 50.34% rated TV as effective. In contrast, the Help App and radio received lower effectiveness ratings, with a notable proportion finding them ineffective or extremely ineffective. These insights suggest that enhancing Tv, Townhall meeting and social media outreach could significantly improve the impact of NAPTIP’s campaigns, while revising or optimizing the Help App and radio strategies may be necessary to increase their effectiveness in combating gender-based human trafficking in Abuja.



Source, field work 2024

Figure 3&4: Participant Responses on the Effectiveness and Impact of NAPTIP’s Communication Strategies Against Human Trafficking



The data reflects participants' perceptions of NAPTIP's communication strategies. For the first question, 41.8% of respondents believe the communication strategies have prompted specific actions or precautions in them (True), while a significant portion (34.4%) is uncertain (Can't Say). Only a small percentage felt the communication strategies were ineffective (Untrue) 12.6%, while the respondents who said (Very Untrue) are 5.13%. In the second question, most respondents (39.5%) believe that NAPTIP's communication strategies have reached vulnerable populations only to a Minimal Extent, with 26.2% uncertain. Few believe these communication strategies have been highly effective (15.1%) (Very Large Extent 1.54%, Large Extent 13.6%). Cumulatively, 56.9% opinions are positive. The data suggests that while there is some recognition of the effectiveness of NAPTIP's communication strategies, there is a considerable level of uncertainty and skepticism about their impact, particularly in reaching vulnerable populations. This could imply a need for NAPTIP to reassess and enhance its communication approaches to better engage and protect those at higher risk of human trafficking. The study might need to explore the reasons behind this uncertainty and the perceived minimal reach to ensure more effective intervention strategies.

DISCUSSION

The data in table 4.2 which is a cross tabulation that seeks to address percentage rating of the effectiveness of NAPTIP communication strategies the channels that is most effective. The findings indicated that social media, townhall meeting and Tv are perceived as the most effective communication strategies by respondents, with 74.83% (cumulatively) rating social media as effective, town hall meeting was cumulatively rated as 55.37% and 50.34% rated TV as effective. This implies that NAPTIP need to utilize the opportunity of Abuja municipal media preference and channels for their campaigns against human trafficking while working on NAPTIP Help App and radio campaigns. This data was supported by the qualitative findings as one of the director affirmed that NAPTIP as an agency has significant numbers of communication strategies ranging from; mass media campaigns such as radio and television, while they host special drama/phone in programmes on radio, campaigns known as NAPTIP on the move episode is being hosted on Tv. He added that NAPTIP equally use town hall meetings; distress hot line call, "NAPTIP Help" (Help App), social media platforms and blue bus campaign.

Additionally, he did mention that while some are not being used regularly, currently, some has stopped running since it was sponsored by external body, such as 'blue bus campaign communication strategy'. He again reveals that the agency has been innovative in its communication approaches as some of the communication strategies were burn out of difficult situations to address specific kind of issue like the 'NAPTIP Help App' and social media which became strong communication strategies during the Covid-19 lock down. Another Director's view also corroborates with this fact but the opinion differs in that she added that NAPTIP also do massive educational programmes in secondary schools across Abuja municipal cities and that the agencies do use more than one communication strategies at a time. This was in line with Olofinbiyi et al., (2021) when they stated that in combining several communication approaches, a comprehensive result can be achieved to address the multifaceted nature of gender-based human



trafficking, targeting prevention, protection, and reintegration efforts in Abuja, Nigeria. Akor, (2015) believe that evaluating the impact of targeted communication interventions on empowering potential female victims and survivors of human trafficking in Abuja is essential for assessing its effectiveness on prevention, protection, and reintegration efforts.

The data in figure 3&4 which seeks to address the questions how NAPTIP communication strategies prompted precaution against human trafficking and has NAPTIP communication strategies effectively reach the vulnerable people at higher risks of human trafficking. The data obtained indicated that 48% opinion was positive saying that NAPTIP communication strategies has prompted precautions against human trafficking, likewise, cumulatively, 56.9% opinions are positive on NAPTIP communication strategies effectively reaching the vulnerable people at higher risks of human trafficking. These findings were supported by the qualitative findings where a director again affirmed that NAPTIP have had a lot of success stories in its operations yet there are still pockets of challenges as push factors increases the level of vulnerability. The factors she mentioned were increased joblessness among youth, declining literacy level, economic hardship, desperation and depressions which has increased suicide rate by the day. She reinstated that many are clueless about how to survive in addition to cultural and religious factors that affects gender based human trafficking. Also, directors in RRS and investigation department were in agreement when they provided that women and young girls are in high risk of vulnerability. Their data further shows that in 2023, NAPTIP rescued 325 victims of human trafficking, while male victims were 52 which is 16% female victims were 273 accounting for 84%. On the account of complaint received by NAPTIP in relation to sexual exploitations, domestic servitude, violence and abuses was 1,278 in 2023, while female complainant was 1,150 accounting for 89.9%, male complainant was 128 which 10.1% (NAPTIP, 2023). This was supported by previous research such as Oladepo et al. (2019), they found that 28% of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical violence since age 15. The KII views affirmed that there are several ongoing trials on cases of either human trafficking or violence against persons being handled in NAPTIP Lagos office in line with the amended act (VAPP 2015).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study successfully gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to assess NAPTIP communication strategies in curtailing gender-based human trafficking in FCT Abuja, Nigeria. However, with 97.7% respondents being able to access media channels such as radio, TV, newspapers, social media, and NAPTIP other digital platforms indicates that NAPTIP's communication strategies are well-positioned to reach and potentially influence the Abuja residents. The study discovered that TV, town hall meetings and social media outreach have significantly improved the impact of NAPTIP's campaigns, while there's a need to optimize the Help App and radio strategies to increase their effectiveness in combating gender-based human trafficking in Abuja. Similarly, the participants' perception is that communication strategies have prompted specific actions or precautions in them while the residents of Abuja believed that NAPTIP's communication strategies have reached vulnerable populations only to a minimal extent with a considerable level of uncertainty and skepticism about their impact, particularly in reaching



vulnerable populations. On the overall, the study holds strongly that NAPTIP need to reassess and enhance its communication approaches to better engage and protect the gender at higher risk of human trafficking in Abuja, Nigeria. The study recommends that NAPTIP should reassess her communication approaches to better engage and protect the gender at higher risk of human trafficking in Abuja. The study equally recommends that NAPTIP communication strategies should be reviewed for optimal effectiveness.

Ethical Clearance

The National Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies NIPSS, Kuru wrote a letter of introduction to NAPTIP. Thereby introducing the researcher and his team to the organization. Upon approval by NAPTIP, a consent letter was issued to all the directors participating in the study. This was to ensure there is no ethical bridge before, during and after the conduct of the research field work.

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Conflict of Interest

There was no conflict of interest

Authors' Contributions

Eze Uchenna Hyginus conceived the study, developed a template for the study and drafted the manuscript while Ogande, O. Anthony PhD and Prof. Samuel, K. Akpede provided academic inputs and supervisory role as the candidates' supervisors.

Availability of data and materials

The datasets on which conclusions were made for this study are available on reasonable request.

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