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## Police perceptions of human trafficking in South Africa

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**Abstract.** Human trafficking is perceived to be a serious and growing problem worldwide. Yet for many years, society as a whole, and the policing profession in particular in South Africa, did not fully grasp the scale and complexity of the problem or its impact. The article seeks to understand and determine the perceptions of police regarding human trafficking in South Africa. The study followed a qualitative approach and purposive sampling was used to select 28 participants in three selected areas of Gauteng Province. The findings revealed that the police lack intensive training on issues of human trafficking and further revealed that police were not able to differentiate between the victims of human trafficking and prostitution. The police should be given adequate time, funding, and training needed to establish a wide base of experience and knowledge from which they can draw upon for future human trafficking investigation.

**Keywords.** Police, Human trafficking, Prostitution, Victims, Law enforcement, Criminal justice system

### Introduction

Motseki (2018) highlighted that as wars and insecurity proceed to violate Africa, a bygone flay of human kind is making an annihilating comeback: the ailment called human trafficking. Human trafficking has been on the rise universally, and Africa has been a fundamentally portion of the around the world showcase in human beings (Cucumanova, 2010:4). Human trafficking not as it were crosses national and worldwide borders, but moreover surfaces at the road level (Clawson, Dutch, & Cummings, 2016). Nearby police regularly are the primary to come into contact with this covert crimes. As to begin with responders, police play a basic part in recognizing and reacting to human trafficking cases. Be that as it may, small is known around how police are organizing their reaction to human trafficking, or the capabilities of law enforcement to reply to desires of trafficking victims.

There's exceptionally small information almost how the police see human trafficking issues in their nearby communities and how their recognitions of the issue impact investigation and reaction techniques. Previous research suggest that neighborhood police are woefully ignorant of human trafficking and commonly need the preparing fundamental to explore these wrongdoings (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2010; Gallagher and Holmes 2008; Newton, Mulcahy, and Martin 2008; Wilson, Walsh, and Kleuber, 2006). The cases that the police do distinguish contrast from the sorts of human trafficking detailed by casualty. Investigate states

that this present day subjugation something else known as trafficking in people or human trafficking can be depicted as the enlisting, harboring, transporting, giving, or getting a individual for compelled work or commercial sex acts through the utilize of constrain, extortion, or restraint (Davidson, 2008; Delport, 2007; Dess, 2013; Mofokeng & Olutola, 2014; Motseki, 2018). This article explores the police perception of human trafficking and seek to identify how their perception of the scourge of human trafficking influence investigation and response strategies.

### **Problem statement**

To date, research on the role of the police in human trafficking work has been restricted and centered fundamentally on preparing needs of law requirement, police corruption, and law requirement association in interdiction and prosecution endeavors. Little is known with respect to law requirement reactions to this crime and their perceptions of this crime (Wilson, Walsh, and Kleuber, 2006). The South African government has enacted and passed distinctive laws within the republic to back and improve the endeavors of the police in combating and investigation of human trafficking. With that said, the arrest rate and prosecution rate of the perpetrators of human trafficking are still low whereas the public and victims are being kidnapped day by day.

Research suggests that police need preparing on how to distinguish human trafficking incidents and have few regulation assets such as conventions or the task of specialized officers to assist guide their reactions to human trafficking (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2010; Gallagher and Holmes 2008; Wilson, Walsh, and Kleuber 2006). The police indicated that they don't deal with human trafficking specifically but for cases of kidnapping and child kidnappings, all the cases of human trafficking were alluded to the Directorate of priority crime investigations. The police are the primary line of defence within the criminal justice system as individuals of crime prevention unit bargain with prostitution and seizing, which may be related to human trafficking. Crime prevention unit encounter crimes of human trafficking as they do crime avoidance obligations in their areas. Which suggests some way or another the police deal with victims of human trafficking and they fair don't know that they are victims of human trafficking. There is limited knowledge about how the police view human trafficking problems in their local communities and how their perceptions of the problem influence investigation and response strategies.

Research by Newton, Mulcahy and Martin (2008) suggest that local police are commonly ignorant of the presence of human trafficking laws in their ranges. Estimates of the extent of human trafficking exploitation change broadly. They are calculated from distinctive information sources and the thoroughness of the investigate upon which they are based is frequently flawed (Gozdziak and Collett, 2005; Tyldum, 2010). When inquired approximately the insights of human trafficking within the zones they police, most of the police demonstrated that no human trafficking was taking put whereas woman and children were trafficked each day and kidnaped. Concurring to Motseki and Mofokeng (2020) clarified that a survivor who was trafficked for eight years indicated that each week there's a new girl who is trafficked. It could be a clear sign that the police don't know the nature and degree of human trafficking, and this prevented the collaborative endeavors to explore, arraign and combat human trafficking.

### **Policing human trafficking in South Africa**

The South African constitution mandate the police on section 205(1) that the police must be structured to function in the national, provincial and, where appropriate, local spheres of government. It state on subsection (3) the objectives of the police as to prevent, combat and

investigate crime, to maintain public order, to protect and secure the inhabitants of the Republic and their property, and to uphold and enforce the law.

The police as mandated by the supreme law of the country which is the constitution, should prevent, combat and investigate crime including human trafficking and protect the victims of this scourge. Emser (2013) postulates that human trafficking is a complex issue that can be considered from different perspectives. Connell (2012) concurs that responding to human trafficking should be treated as human right South Africa. The researcher is of the view that police expertise about techniques to investigate, detect traffickers, identify and care for their victims and prosecute traffickers is yet to be realised in South Africa. The police are still experiencing lot of challenges in combating human trafficking and the challenges include limited budget, limited personnel and physical resources, lack of capacity, resources and training to deal with human trafficking, insufficient knowledge and application of a clear strategy to combat human trafficking and limited awareness and information about the human trafficking scourge.

Motseki (2018) highlighted that in spite of the fact that the police due to competing needs, has not however codify this crime for utilization by the public, it is basic that the official statistics made known to the public. Comparing the number of prosecutions with the number of identified victims would highlight the degree of the problem. The discharge of official statistics, in spite of the fact that contended as untrustworthy, would all things considered, give as an mindfulness with respect to the modus operandi used by perpetrators, reported/detected cases in connection to conviction rate to the imminent victims and the public. The researcher is of the view that this would help all role-players, to create least measures concerning the reaction of CJS to trafficking cases as well as made strides administrations to the victims.

A focus on vulnerability will enhance the human rights component of trafficking prevention policies. An improved cohesion between the police and other role-players, would go a long way to align the day-to-day tactics into a long a long term anti-trafficking strategies and national responses, sharing from their own experiences and identifying elements that constitute best practices (Emser, 2013). A multi-disciplinary unit within the police is a necessity, which should include amongst others; officials from the different government departments. This collaboration will enable the unit to be effective in reducing the ever-increasing phenomenon of human trafficking in South Africa.

### **Law enforcement perceptions of human trafficking**

Effective identification of human trafficking cases is both basic to ensure fruitful arrests and prosecutions of perpetrators and ensure the reclamation of victims. Erroneous perceptions by law requirement almost what human trafficking is and where it happens, can influence the way that human trafficking laws are translated and executed (Farrell, McDevitt, and Fahy 2008). A study on law enforcement perceptions of human trafficking demonstrated that indeed on the off chance that law enforcement personnel were familiar with the police definition of trafficking, they as often as possible had trouble putting the definition of extreme forms of trafficking into practice (Newton, Mulcahy, and Martin 2008). This study found that it was common for law enforcement officers to have trouble in recognizing between human trafficking and carrying. In spite of the fact that respondents in some cases famous that human trafficking may include both citizens and remote victims, they commonly related human trafficking with people who lacked legal status.

A supported belief that human trafficking isn't a nearby issue permits nearby law enforcement specialists to avoid creating a modern understanding of the components that

recognize trafficking as a criminal offense. In reality, one consider found that when law enforcement officers accept human trafficking is of little or no concern in their communities, their information has frequently been procured through a sensationalized, media educated focal point (Wilson, Walsh, and Kleuber, 2006). Erroneous ideas around what human trafficking victims see like are common among nearby law enforcement officers in South Africa and can lead to confusing or mislabeling human trafficking cases as other sorts of offenses (Srikantiah, 2007; Farrell and Fahy, 2009).

Unfamiliarity with legitimate definitions of human trafficking further contributes to misperceptions almost what human trafficking is (Newton, Mulcahy and Martin 2008). Law enforcement may categorize victims as offenders, accusing them for being undocumented, being included in prostitution or something else being complicit in their victimization (Farrell, Owens and McDevitt 2014). Motseki (2018) concurred that in a few occurrences, this has driven to the misusing of trafficking cases, with the casualties of the wrongdoing being captured and treated as offenders. Not as it were does this crush the believe required for viable collaboration within the investigation and prosecution of the offense, but it too revictimises and stigmatises victims within the prepare. These skewed recognitions influence how law requirement gets it and actualizes modern human trafficking laws and can essentially affect the number of trafficking cases recognized and authoritatively recorded by the police.

### **Theoretical Framework: Routine Activity Theory**

Routine activity theory gives a valuable instrument for understanding police perceptions and responses to a recently characterized or re-imagined crime such as human trafficking. Routine activity theory gives an imperative system for clarifying and deciphering crime and the police recognition of human trafficking in South Africa. Routine activity theory was initially formulated by Cohen and Felson (1979) to clarify rise changes in total savage crime rates within the United States taking after World War II (Reyns, 2012). The theory sets that criminal victimization happens when there are three basic components. These components incorporate an appropriate target, a propelled offender, and an unfit or absent guardian of property or people (White, 2019).

Miller (2013) depicts a reasonable target as a individual, an protest, or a put, which can be attractive and productive for criminals. In other words, a reasonable target is something, which gives moment benefit to guilty parties. This will be the potential victims of human trafficking who are helpless to traffickers due to destitution, unemployment and destitute financial conditions. The moment component that encourages crime is the absence of a competent gatekeeper. Guardianship is characterized as the physical or typical presence of an person or bunch either of people that act intentioned or inadvertently to put off a potential criminal occasion (Lynch, 1987). A few illustrations of absence of able guardians is police corruption and broken criminal justice system. Motseki and Mofokeng (2020) highlighted that corruption could be a steady worldwide wonder, which is getting to be more complex and seriously as competition for assets increments.

Corruption is committed when a individual specifically or indirectly gives a delight in arrange to impact the recipient to work out his or her duties unlawfully (Motseki and Mofokeng, 2020). Prior investigate demonstrates that one of the four measurements of police corruption that modern police theory underlines is the impact of the social, financial, and political situations in which police teach, systems, and offices work (Mofokeng, 2016:153). The final component that's basic for a crime to happen is the nearness of a spurred guilty party. Cohen and Felson (1979) kept up that crime can as it were be committed in the event that a likely guilty

party considers that a target is reasonable, and a competent guardian is absent. They both included that it is the offender's evaluation of a circumstance that decides whether a crime will take put.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach was utilized in arrange to appropriately research the police perceptions of human trafficking in South Africa. The researcher chosen on a qualitative approach since they wished to pick up knowledge into people's contemplations, states of mind, conduct, esteem frameworks, sentiments, concerns and inspirations (Bezuidenhout, 2011). Qualitative research gives individuals with a implies of endeavouring to get it a world that cannot be caught on in terms of numbers and objectivity. Qualitative approaches give ways of translating and analysing the digressive development of ordinary occasions and of investigating the verifiable nature of life inside a social gather or nearby setting (De Vos et al, 2011). In theory, it appears that qualitative research is the leading course to require in each research situation, since it gives individuals with an understanding that takes under consideration the reality that each individual is an person with a distinctive viewpoint on the world The interviews were from more than one person, because the goal was to identify differences and similarities across participants in a sample. In-depth interviews were used by the researchers, and the reason being that in-depth interviews are conducted with unique individuals or a small number of people (Creswell, 2014:15).

### **Population and sampling**

The target population is the population to which the researcher ideally would like to generalise his or her results (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, and 2005:122). White (2005:113) defines population as all possible elements that can be included in the research. The ideal population of this study consists of officials from Directorate for Priority Crime Investigation unit which deals with human trafficking, four officials were interviewed and their ranks were Lt Colonel, Warrant Officer and Captain, all of them were males in terms of gender, and three of them had between 24 and 34 years of experience. All four officials interviewed were dealing specifically with human trafficking and the officials were interviewed in two separate areas, namely Germiston and Vereeniging.

In terms of the SAPS, 24 officers in total were interviewed from three selected areas of Gauteng Province, namely Pretoria, Springs and Kempton park, the ranks were Constable, Sergeant, Warrant officers, Lieutenant and Captain, in terms of the gender, it was 8 females and 16 males and their experience was between 10 years to 27 years. The total sample population was 28 participants. The officials that were interviews were from visible policing and detective service units. Kumar (2014:229) highlights that a sample is the method of selecting a number of from a greater gather as the premise for evaluating or anticipating the predominance of an obscure piece of data, circumstance or result with respect to the greater gather.

This study followed a purposive sampling. The basis behind the choice of a purposive sampling prefaced on the reality that the authors have information of chosen regions of this think about counting certain people from the associations who took portion in this consider. Non-probability sampling was received, whereby a purposive sample was chosen as the individuals of the population for focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) were chosen haphazardly. The basis utilized for determination of the sample was based on the number of participant's a long time of benefit, which translate to encounter and information on the subject matter. Members were White, Indians, and Africans talking

distinctive dialects; a few were familiar in isiZulu, English and Sesotho, to be exact, and any dialect of understanding alluding to chosen residents of Gauteng Area. The author is of the opinion that this study presents a significant contribution to the identification and understanding police perceptions of human trafficking in South Africa and subsequently, presents practical recommendations emanated from the findings, which could be used during the identification of this phenomenon in South Africa.

### **Data collection**

For the purpose of complementing information gathering strategy in expansion to the literature study, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KII) were conducted. Consent for information collection was endorsed by the South African Police Benefit Head office, Information was collected by using unstructured interviews to distinguished FGDs and KII. The taking after SAPS police stations were gone by around Gauteng: Pretoria central, Kempton Park and Springs. The phenomenological approach was utilized to get it the regular involvement of the members. Concurring to Creswell (1998:51-52) phenomenological thinks about describe the meaning of the life experience of a phenomenon by a few people.

### **Data analysis**

De Vos et al. (2011:333) proposes that data analysis includes reducing the volume of raw data, filtering significance from trivia, identifying significant patterns, and developing a system for communicating the essence of what the information uncover. Concurring to Welman and Kruger (2000) the investigation of data assembled by implies of unstructured interviews is based on the interviewer's record. Amid this record-taking prepare, the interviewer took notes, with a view to composing a more detailed, and total, report afterwards. Voice recorder was utilized when interviews were conducted, with the see to interpreting the data accumulated at a afterward organize. The analyst at that point sorted out the information by categorising it on the premise of subjects, concepts, or comparable highlights. This is often assist contended by Leedy et al. (2005:150) who expressed that information examination takes put at whatever point hypothesis and information are compared. Utilizing ATLAS.ti, adaptation 4.2 (ATLAS.ti, 1999) subjective data were coded.

Following Braun and Clarke's (2013); Braun, Clarke and Rance (2014) as well as Braun, Clarke and Terry (2014) guidelines for thematic analysis, the transcript were studied, re-read and coded into notable themes. These topics were at that point either collapsed into one another to make bigger themes. Themes were named and characterized. The sorting out of themes were assist organized into a unthinkable arrange and categorised into broader worldwide subjects (Attride-String, 2001: 385-405). Whereas this prepare was recurrent and requires different levels of re-reading and recording, the comes about were displayed directly for the reason of clarity. After having collected information, the analyst compared and contrasts the data given and after that translates the information (Fink, 1995:43).

All interviews were transcribed and after that examined a few times in conjunction with the comparing non-verbal clues given by the members. Field notes provided assist guidance during the data-analysis process, supporting the method of separating the information into identifiable topics. Amid the process, the comes about were confirmed persistently by implies of sound and visual recordings of the interviews, which demonstrated exceptionally accommodating as a implies of guaranteeing information quality. This also provided the opportunity to take after a handle by which the diverse subjects might be compared and relations

between the distinctive subjects can be considered, so as to become mindful of designs that can be categorised. The interviews kept going between 30 and 45 minutes each and were audio-taped, at that point interpreted for information investigation. A outline of the most information categories and the sub-categories is displayed within the frame of topics. Two forms were taken after to guarantee compelling information control. Firstly, all questions inquired were written down and then studied several times. Secondly, data results were compared with existing literature, to identify similarities or discrepancies that might call for further research in future. In addition, field notes that were also written down provided further guidance during the data-analysis process, supporting the process of dividing the data into identifiable themes.

### **Ethical clearance**

The research received ethical clearance from Tshwane University of Technology (TUT), and permission to conduct interviews were granted by the following organisations: the police (South African Police Service and Directorate for priority crime investigation).

### **Findings and discussions**

#### **Based on your experience, how do you perceive human trafficking, do you believe it exist in the area you police?**

The police believed that human trafficking does not exist in the areas they police, and other believed that it is existing but it is not high as indicated by the media reports. Most police believed that the communities exaggerate about the high rates of human trafficking. The following were some of their responses quoted verbatim, and no corrections of their language were made:

*“Human trafficking does not exist in the area I’m working on, I never experienced or encountered the victims of human trafficking. I think everyone is just exaggerating and making it as if it’s a problem” (Participant 4).*

*“I believe human trafficking is existing but it’s not as high as the media report on the news. I have dealt with the victims of human trafficking, although it was difficult to be really sure whether victims were trafficked or they were just being involved in prostitution” (participant 17).*

*“This crime is very complicated for us and I believe it’s there but it’s not very high as the community and media say it is. I think we need more training and more resources to deal with this crime because so far our efforts as the police are not enough that’s why I can say it’s not high only to find that it’s really bad out there” (Participant 15).*

The above statements of the participant’s shows that the police have limited knowledge and information about human trafficking due to the way they perceive or view this crime. The police believe that human trafficking is not a problem or it does not exist in the areas they police and this perception has led to the police ignoring the real problems. There is problems with investigation, undercover operations and prosecution of this problem in South Africa (Mofokeng and Olutola, 2014). The police are not putting more effort in dealing this crime, because they believe it’s not a problem and it’s not high. Motseki (2018) concurred that the extent and nature of human trafficking is very high and human trafficking has reached alarming rates as there is a new girl trafficked every week in South Africa.

#### **Based on your experience, explain what are the strategies in place to combat Human Trafficking in your organisation.**

The participants clearly indicated that the strategy used to combat human trafficking is awareness campaigns. However, the participants from the SAPS highlighted that they deal with

crimes like kidnapping, rape, drugs and murder. They highlighted that only Directorate for priority crime investigation deal with human trafficking. The following were some of their responses quoted verbatim, and no corrections of their language were made:

*“Human trafficking is very complex crime and directorate for priority crime investigation has its investigating team dealing with human trafficking. The main strategy is awareness campaigns at the farms, shopping malls during the week, shopping complex and road shows, and the legislation, before there was no Act dealing with human trafficking, in 2015 the president signed into law the Act 7 of 2013” (Participant 10).*

*“We as the police conduct disruptive operations, where we target certain areas where we feel human trafficking is taking place. We conduct also awareness campaigns at the Bus stops, distribute pamphlets, visit refuge areas, we do go to the borders gates. We also have the hotlines which is open to the public. The hotline focuses on human trafficking and smuggling” (Participant 8).*

*“Well, we do not have a special strategy so far when it comes to investigations, identification and locating perpetrators of human trafficking. We just do normal investigation and to be honest we are not doing the impact level because human trafficking is still continuing in South Africa” (Participant 3).*

The above statements from the participants highlighted that the police and directorate for priority crime investigation do not have a clear strategy to combat, prevent and investigate human trafficking in South Africa. Participants indicated that their main strategy is awareness campaigns and other said they use normal investigation methods which does not yield any positive results. This campaigns are done in the wrong areas at the wrong time, because they are targeting the wrong population. The potential victims of human trafficking are young people and during the week they are found in schools and universities. Doing awareness campaigns at bus stops during the week will not assist in preventing human trafficking.

### **Challenges that hinders the Relevant Stakeholders to successfully combat Human Trafficking in Gauteng Province**

It should be noted that findings such as those given below were similar among all the selected participants, regardless of the study location. Examples of some of the remarks regarding their experiences in terms of dealing with cases of human trafficking were similar:

*“Victims status affect the whole investigation, if the victim is subjected to threats or intimidation. Lack of cooperation from victims, corruption is also a problem, language barrier from the victims who are from outside South Africa, delays in the court proceedings, courts are taking long to deal with cases of human trafficking, no specialized courts in South Africa dealing with cases of human trafficking” (participant 16).*

*“Corruption in the case of home affairs is a problem. Police officers are friends with traffickers, they tip traffickers about the operation of the police. Immigration officers should undergo security clearance and vetting when they are being employed” (participant 5).*

*“The problem is the resources on our part, we don’t have that can enable us to respond effectively to human trafficking. I will also say we still lack intensive training on issues of human trafficking. We can’t differentiate between victims of human trafficking and those working as sex workers on the night clubs, brothels so we need an intensive training on that. Lack of cooperation and support from other stakeholders. Another challenge is the budget, for any program or imbizo, a proper budget has to be prioritized for the event” (participant 11).*

Based on the above there are lot of challenges which hinders the stakeholders to successful identify, locate, investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of human trafficking. Victims which are not cooperating with investigation due to their mental, physical or

psychological status. Intimidations and threats from the traffickers is another challenge which lead to the victims not cooperating with the stakeholders. Corruption is a major contributing factor to the increasing numbers of human trafficking, the victims are being abducted and kidnapped from the safe houses. The government officials responsible for safety homes work with the traffickers and victims find themselves back in the trafficking ring after being rescued by the police.

Another challenge that was revealed was lack of resources to effectively, investigate and combat human trafficking. Resource like manpower and budget are lacking and traffickers use money to suppress the powers of the stakeholders responsible for human trafficking. Cooperation and support from other role players responsible for human trafficking was identified as a challenge and was significantly hindering the progress in combating human trafficking.

### **Nature and Extent of Human Trafficking in Three Selected Areas of Gauteng Province**

The participants when asked about the nature and extent of human trafficking in three selected areas of Gauteng Province highlighted the problem of lot of brothels, massage parlous and prostitution (related verbatim):

*“Prostitution is very high in Gauteng Province, there are lot of brothels and night clubs in Gauteng, massage parlous, spars, and this are used for human trafficking. Prostitution is very rife in Gauteng Province”* (participant 14). *“Gauteng is the most problematic when it comes to human trafficking. Nigerians traffic or lure victims from small areas of South Africa and neighbouring countries to areas like Hillbrow in Gauteng. The problem is very big and uncontrollable”* (participant 10). *The problem is very big when I look at numbers between 2013 to 2016 is 300 victims of human trafficking trafficked from the rural areas of South Africa to Gauteng Province”* (**Participant 24**).

*“Human trafficking is rife in Gauteng despite the low numbers DSD is sitting with. The dilemma is that people are not reporting this crime. Some say they not even aware that it is trafficking, while others say they don’t even know if it is a crime. Gauteng is considered as the land of milk and honey and everyone who comes from outside the country and even other provinces aspire to be in Gauteng and experience its life style”* (**Participant 9**).

The above paint a clear picture that the extent of human trafficking in South Africa, is very deep. The problem with this scourge is that no official statistics available to measure the problem, the police do not release the official statistics.

When asked about the profile of victims and profile of traffickers of human trafficking in three selected areas of Gauteng Province, the participants explained that the profile of victims of human trafficking include girls between the age 13 to 27 years from the rural areas of South Africa and victims were from all different races. Other victims were from South African Development countries, Thailand and Brazil and the age is from 18 to 31 years. The participants further explained that the traffickers profile include South African citizens, Nigerians, Somalians, Thai and Brazilian mafias. These are some of the responses from the participants (related verbatim):

*“The profile of victims of human trafficking include the girls below teenage age 13 years Thai, South African girls, Asian girls involved in massage parlous, and spar, European girls involved in entertainment, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Lesotho. The profile of perpetrators includes Nigerians, Thai and to small extent you will find them on forced labour Somalians, Brazilians ladies”*.

*“Profile of perpetrators of human traffickers include South Africans, Nigerians, Asians women, Thai and SADC countries. Profile of victims of human trafficking include the girls from the age of 17 to 24 years and that would be South African, and mostly Thai ladies between the age of 18 to 27 years of age” (Participant 18).*

*“Perpetrators of human trafficking mostly is Nigerians, Somalians and Pakistan on Labour, they traffic their own brothers to come and work in South Africa and for sex and prostitution it’s Nigerians. Victims of human trafficking include Thai ladies, SADC, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and South Africans. In land mostly the victims will be from areas like (KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, and few from other countries)” (Participant 21).*

*“Perpetrators of human trafficking are Thai, there is a sophisticated syndicate from Thailand. You also hear their Nigerians involved in human trafficking. There are also South African working with people from outside, South African are used by Nigerians. There is a trend of Lesotho nationals who are lured to South African to work as domestic workers, when they get to South African, they forced to sex trafficking and labour. Profile of victims of human trafficking is Thai, in Thailand opening a brothel is acceptable, and sex work is legal. Late twenties to early thirties foreigners. South African is young girls between 16 to 25 years. You also get young adults from South Africa, SADC countries like Mozambique, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Lesotho” (Participant 11).*

### **Identified themes**

#### **Limited awareness and information about the human trafficking scourge**

Individuals are manipulated for various reasons. Their awareness lacks at times, resulting in bad decision-making. Awareness should be done in places and areas where there are lot of people who have potential of becoming victims of human trafficking. Rose-Ackerman and Palifka (2016) points out that only a few countries are able to provide data on trends in trafficking over several years, making it difficult to accurately establish the extent to which trafficking may be increasing. Although the full scale of trafficking is uncertain, the available data clearly indicate which are the most important source countries and regions for victims of trafficking (Khanyile, 2018). In South Africa, this is not the case as there are no official statistics on human trafficking. Motseki (2018) concurred that it is essential that the official statistics made known to the public.

#### **Coordination between the police and Prosecutors**

Successful management of trafficking cases requires coordination between various criminal justice practitioners. This coordination should not solely focus on securing a conviction but also on maintaining the victim’s well-being (Farrell and Fahy, 2008). It is important for law enforcement officers to inform the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution about the case at the outset of their investigations. This will ensure that the appropriate investigative actions are taken to help increase the chances of the case going to trial and evidence being strong enough to secure a conviction. The researcher is of the view that this will also assist in determining when the case is ready for trial or not as the director of public prosecution will make a determination after assessing the evidence presented by the police detective.

#### **Reliance on traditional investigation methods and strategies**

The police relied mainly on proactively identifying human trafficking cases, they commonly utilised traditional investigation methods and strategies, such as stings in known brothels in a bid to rescue the victims and to arrest the perpetrators. This did not yield any

positive results as some of operations and traditional investigations were compromised due to corruption between the SAPS and the traffickers. Motseki and Mofokeng (2020) highlighted that the prevalence of corruption amongst the officials, hampered effective implementation of the national anti-trafficking strategy. The lack of command and control measures offers less restrictions for perpetrators to who incentivised the officials involved in corruptive practices, thus increase widespread illicit practices with trafficking vulnerabilities. Despite endemic corruption among officials that impedes anti-trafficking efforts and enables traffickers to operate with impunity, there were very few of the officials prosecuted for trafficking offenses.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

It was clear during the data collection that the police use awareness as the main strategy to fight and combat human trafficking. The paper recommends that the police should ensure that awareness is done in the areas where there are lot of potential victims of human trafficking. The author based on the findings, further recommend that the police should utilise social media platforms in terms of raising awareness. Human traffickers use different social media platforms to lure and recruit their potential victims.

It is essential that more resource allocation provided to the police to adequately, respond to human trafficking. The author further, recommend the up skilling of police officials with up-to-date training on regularly basis. During data collection, the police officials especially the visible policing members highlighted that it was difficult for them to differentiate between the victims of human trafficking and those doing prostitution. At the regional and provincial levels, numerous training materials and reference guidelines, be circulated published to inform and train a wide range of police about what they can do in response to trafficking. The materials are should be translated into different official languages, coordinated from the Head Office for the purposes of consistency in the contents.

In conclusion, police should change their perception of not believing that human trafficking is not high in the areas they police, the police should ensure that they thoroughly investigate, combat and prevent human trafficking. There is much the police can do to improve their response to human trafficking, but real change requires a commitment beyond raising awareness and allocating resources. The police and the public they serve must define human trafficking broadly and consistently, and law enforcement must rethink the investigative strategies they utilize to identify and combat the problem. The police cannot wait for victims or concerned citizens to report problems. Instead, they must develop distinct human trafficking enforcement practices that will lead to the identification of cases.

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