

An Examination of Policies Addressing Human Trafficking in Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking remains a pervasive global issue, often hidden under various forms of exploitation, and continues to impact millions worldwide. Frequently termed modern-day slavery, it is a grave violation of human rights with long-lasting, devastating consequences for its victims. Effective policies are crucial in the fight against this inhuman practice, focusing on preventing exploitation, protecting at-risk populations, and delivering justice to victims. In Tanzania, numerous policies and laws have been implemented to combat human trafficking. Despite this robust policy framework, the country remains under Tier II of the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, signaling that trafficking persists as a serious concern. This study sought to critically examine the effectiveness of the current policies addressing human trafficking in Tanzania from a qualitative perspective. The findings highlighted that Tanzania has developed a strong and comprehensive policy approach aimed at protecting victims, preventing trafficking, and prosecuting perpetrators. However, while the legal and institutional frameworks are in place, challenges remain in their execution. The efforts to combat human trafficking are hindered by inadequate resources, weak coordination among stakeholders, and gaps in the enforcement of laws. These deficiencies limit the overall impact of Tanzania's anti-trafficking initiatives, allowing the issue to persist despite the country's commitment. The study underscores the need for improved resource allocation, better coordination mechanisms, and stricter enforcement procedures to fully realize the goals of Tanzania's anti-trafficking policies and effectively reduce the prevalence of this heinous crime.

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Introduction

Human trafficking is a serious global issue that undermines human rights, erodes the social fabric of societies, and causes profound harm to its victims. It involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring, or receipt of people through force, fraud, or coercion for purposes of exploitation, such as forced labor or sexual slavery. While trafficking affects nearly every country, its impact is particularly severe in regions with high levels of poverty, inequality, and weak legal frameworks. Addressing human trafficking through effective policies is essential for preventing exploitation, protecting vulnerable populations, and ensuring justice for victims. Comprehensive and well-enforced policies can mitigate the devastating effects of trafficking, curtail criminal activities, and uphold the dignity and rights of individuals who are at risk of falling prey to traffickers [1],[2].

Effective policies are crucial for protecting vulnerable populations, who are often the primary targets of human trafficking [3]. These populations include women, children, rural communities, migrants, and impoverished people, who may lack access to resources, education, and legal protection. In regions where social and economic vulnerabilities are pervasive, traffickers exploit individuals by promising better opportunities, only to subject them to forced labor, sexual exploitation, or other forms of abuse. Policies that directly address the socio-economic factors contributing to vulnerability can help reduce the risks of trafficking. For example, policies that enhance access to education, create employment opportunities and ensure social protection for marginalized groups can reduce the conditions that make individuals susceptible to trafficking.

Upholding human rights is another critical reason for developing and implementing robust anti-trafficking policies. Trafficking victims are subjected to extreme violations of their fundamental rights, including the right to freedom, dignity, and safety. Effective policies not only criminalize trafficking but also provide mechanisms for preventing human rights abuses and holding perpetrators accountable [3]. This legal protection ensures that governments fulfill their international obligations under treaties such as the Palermo Protocol, which requires states to prevent and combat trafficking, protect victims, and promote cooperation between countries. Furthermore, human trafficking policies grounded in human rights principles ensure that victims

are treated as individuals with rights, not just as objects of criminal offenses, thereby reinforcing the need for humane and victim-centered approaches [4].

Reducing crime and exploitation is also an integral benefit of strong trafficking policies. Human trafficking is often linked to organized crime, drug trafficking, and other illicit activities that destabilize societies and economies. By implementing effective anti-trafficking laws and frameworks, governments can disrupt the networks that facilitate trafficking and reduce the incidence of related criminal activities [5]. For instance, policies that strengthen law enforcement capabilities, provide resources for investigating trafficking cases, and enhance cross-border cooperation can help dismantle trafficking rings and prosecute traffickers. In turn, this reduces the exploitation of individuals and weakens the broader criminal enterprises that thrive on human trafficking.

Effective policies also play a pivotal role in supporting trafficking survivors. Victims of trafficking experience severe physical, emotional, and psychological trauma, often requiring immediate and long-term assistance to rebuild their lives [6]. Policies that provide comprehensive support services, such as legal aid, medical care, counseling, and rehabilitation programs, are essential for helping survivors recover and reintegrate into society. These services not only address the immediate needs of victims but also contribute to breaking the cycle of exploitation, as many survivors are at risk of being re-trafficked if adequate support is not provided.

Additionally, effective policies enhance law enforcement and accountability by empowering authorities to investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers. Many trafficking cases go unpunished due to lack of resources, dishonesty, or inadequate legal frameworks. Well-designed policies can improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies to detect trafficking activities, investigate cases thoroughly, and bring perpetrators to justice [7]. Moreover, these policies should include mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating their effectiveness, ensuring that gaps in enforcement are identified and addressed over time [8].

International cooperation is another vital aspect of anti-trafficking policies. Given that human trafficking often involves the movement of people across borders, it requires coordinated efforts between countries to combat it [9]. Effective policies foster collaboration with neighboring countries and international organizations, enabling joint investigations, information sharing, and extradition of traffickers [10]. By strengthening international cooperation, countries can better address the transnational nature of human trafficking and develop more comprehensive strategies to prevent it.

Furthermore, addressing human trafficking through effective policies promotes gender equality, as women and girls are disproportionately affected by trafficking. Many trafficking victims are forced into sexual exploitation or domestic servitude, with women and girls

comprising the majority of those exploited [11]. Policies that take a gender-sensitive approach help to address the specific vulnerabilities faced by women and girls, ensuring that their rights are protected and that they are not subjected to further exploitation. By integrating gender considerations into anti-trafficking efforts, policymakers can create more targeted interventions that empower women and reduce the gendered dimensions of trafficking.

The purpose of examining the current policies addressing human trafficking from a qualitative standpoint is to provide a deeper, more nuanced understanding of their effectiveness, Specifically, the study intends to;

- Explore the Legal and Policy Framework for human trafficking in Tanzania
- Identify Institutions involved in implementing different Anti-trafficking policies and Laws in Tanzania
- Analyze the effectiveness of various anti-trafficking policies and laws

Material and Methods

A qualitative approach to examining human trafficking policies involves a detailed investigation into how these policies are formulated, implemented, and experienced by those affected. This approach provides depth and context that quantitative data may not capture, focusing on the subtleties of human behavior, institutional practices, and policy impacts. Specifically, the study employed a documentary review and Key informant interviews with key players in implementing human trafficking laws and policies.

A. Documentary review

For the review, various documents were critically examined, including international treaties and protocols, national legislation, national action plans, strategies, and reports. This method involved systematically reviewing and analyzing key policy documents, legal frameworks, and reports related to human trafficking. The review focused on international instruments such as the United Nations Protocol, national laws like the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, and relevant action plans and surveys. By interpreting these documents, the study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of legal frameworks and anti-trafficking efforts, providing a comprehensive understanding of existing measures and identifying areas for improvement.

B. Key informant interview

This tool was employed in the study to gather in-depth information from key stakeholders involved in combating human trafficking. Conducting interviews with individuals who have direct experience or expertise in human trafficking and policy implementation was essential for obtaining valuable qualitative data. Key stakeholders included officers from various government departments, such as the police, immigration, social welfare, and community development offices. Additionally, the study interviewed staff from the FARAJA Fund, a non-governmental

organization (NGO) working closely with the government to protect human trafficking victims. The sampling technique used was purposive, targeting those with relevant knowledge and experience in the field. A total of eight respondents were selected for interviews, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and effectiveness of anti-trafficking measures. This method enabled the study to capture different perspectives, particularly from those directly involved in law enforcement, victim support, and policy enforcement.

Results and Discussion

A. Legal and Policy Framework for human trafficking in Tanzania

Tanzania has developed a range of laws and policies to address human trafficking, reflecting its commitment to combating this grave issue. These include; The Anti Trafficking in Person Act 2008 [10], The National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Action Plan (2013-2017) [12], The National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor (2018-2022) [13], The Child Act 2009 [14] and The Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act, 1998 [15]. Further Tanzania has ratified different international instruments including; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW 1981), The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC, 2000), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), the ILO Convention Number 182 on the Worst forms of Child Labour (1999) and the UN High Level Meeting on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons (2013).

B. An Analysis of Policy Effectiveness

Several aspects of Tanzania's policies have proven effective in combating human trafficking, particularly through legislation and coordinated national action plans. The aspects include comprehensiveness of the legal framework, its capability for victim protection and rehabilitation, child protection and enforcement.

C. Comprehensive Legal Framework

The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, 2008 (URT, 2008) stands as a pivotal piece of legislation in Tanzania's fight against human trafficking. It criminalizes trafficking in its many forms, including forced labor, sexual exploitation, and the trafficking of children, providing a comprehensive legal framework to address both national and transnational trafficking [16],[17]. By clearly defining trafficking offenses, the Act leaves little ambiguity, enabling law enforcement and judicial authorities to effectively identify and prosecute traffickers. These offenses include recruitment, transportation, harboring, or receipt of persons through means such as force, coercion, abduction, or deception for exploitation. The penalties stipulated in the Act are severe, serving as a strong deterrent. Traffickers, upon conviction, can face lengthy prison sentences and significant fines, depending on the gravity of the offense.

Beyond punishment, the Act emphasizes victim protection. It ensures that victims of trafficking, regardless of their nationality, are not only safeguarded but also provided with necessary support, such as medical care, shelter, and legal assistance [14]. This is particularly important for vulnerable populations, such as women and children, who are most often exploited. The inclusion of protective measures for foreign victims, such as safeguards against deportation, shows the Act's acknowledgment of the global dimensions of trafficking. This provision allows foreign victims to remain in Tanzania for the duration of their legal proceedings, without fear of immediate deportation, ensuring they can testify against traffickers and receive proper justice. Ultimately, the Act presents a holistic approach to combating trafficking by addressing prevention, protection, and prosecution.

The Tanzania's anti-trafficking framework also ensures Victim Protection and Rehabilitation. This is addressed through both the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, of 2008 and the Child Act, of 2009 [16],[17]. These laws are designed to ensure that victims, especially children, are protected and receive the necessary support for their recovery and reintegration into society. The provisions include the establishment of shelters where victims can find refuge, as well as access to medical care and psychological counseling to address the physical and emotional trauma they have experienced. The focus on child victims is particularly important, as children are highly vulnerable to exploitation, including trafficking for labor, sexual exploitation, or domestic servitude. The Child Act includes comprehensive measures aimed at safeguarding children's welfare, ensuring that they are not only rescued from trafficking situations but are also provided with long-term support [14]. This holistic approach to rehabilitation helps victims rebuild their lives and regain a sense of normalcy.

Furthermore, the establishment of victim support services through collaboration with government agencies, NGOs, and international partners creates a safety net for trafficking survivors. These services provide victims with a pathway to reintegration, offering vocational training, educational opportunities, and social support, thereby reducing the risk of re-victimization or further exploitation [18].

Tanzania has strengthened its legal framework to combat human trafficking through the development and implementation of various action plans, including the National Anti-Trafficking in Persons Action Plan (2013-2017) [12] and the National Action Plan to Combat Child Labor (2018-2022) [13]. These plans complement the country's legal provisions by outlining strategic measures aimed at preventing trafficking and addressing the root causes such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education.

The focal point of these action plans is prevention, which is achieved through community engagement and public awareness campaigns that educate people, particularly in rural areas, about the risks and realities of human trafficking. By addressing the vulnerabilities that

traffickers often exploit, such as economic hardships and social isolation, these initiatives aim to reduce the supply of potential victims. Education programs also play a significant role by empowering communities with knowledge and tools to recognize, report, and prevent trafficking. These coordinated efforts enhance public awareness and contribute to building a safer environment for vulnerable populations, especially women and children.

The policies emphasize the importance of coordination between law enforcement agencies, government bodies, and Non-Governmental Organizations in addressing human trafficking. The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and National Action plans promote inter-agency collaboration, strengthening the capacity of law enforcement to investigate and prosecute trafficking cases. This multi-sectoral approach ensures that trafficking is tackled from multiple angles, enhancing the overall effectiveness of anti-trafficking efforts in the country.

The Child Act, of 2009 and the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act, of 1998 are vital components of Tanzania's legal efforts to protect children from trafficking and sexual exploitation. These laws emphasize the importance of safeguarding minors and recognizing their vulnerability within trafficking networks, where they are often exploited for labor or sexual purposes. The Child Act sets out comprehensive child protection measures, including mechanisms to prevent trafficking and ensure that children who are victims of exploitation receive proper care, rehabilitation, and reintegration support. Similarly, the Sexual Offences Special Provisions Act, of 1998 targets sexual exploitation, establishing severe penalties for offenders involved in crimes such as child abuse and sexual exploitation of minors. This law not only criminalizes sexual violence but also mandates victim support services, ensuring that children are provided with the medical, psychological, and social services they need to recover from trauma. Together, these laws demonstrate Tanzania's commitment to protecting the rights and welfare of children, reinforcing the importance of strong legal frameworks in combating child trafficking and exploitation.

D. Gaps in Enforcement of policies against human trafficking in Tanzania

While Tanzania’s legal and policy framework against human trafficking has made significant strides, there are notable shortcomings that hinder its effectiveness in practice. Some of the shortcomings include under-resourcing, limited victim support services, and, Inadequate Awareness and Prevention Efforts.

Although the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, of 2008 provides a comprehensive legal framework, enforcement of the law remains fragile. Some trafficking cases go uninvestigated or unprosecuted, and traffickers are often not held accountable. Law enforcement agencies lack the training, resources, and capacity to effectively identify, investigate, and prosecute trafficking cases. This has led to low conviction rates, allowing traffickers to continue their operations. Additionally, inconsistencies in how the law is applied across different regions further exacerbate

this enforcement gap. In an interview with a law enforcement officer working on anti-trafficking efforts, he expressed the challenges in enforcing the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, of 2008;

> "The law is there, but the problem is we don't have enough resources or training to handle trafficking cases effectively. Many of the officers don't even fully understand the law, and as a result, a lot of cases slip through the cracks. Even when we manage to arrest traffickers, the prosecution process is slow, and it's common to see these criminals back on the streets due to a lack of evidence. In some areas, there's little to no coordination between agencies, so the application of the law is inconsistent. This makes it difficult to get the convictions we need to send a strong message."

Government agencies tasked with combating human trafficking, such as the police, immigration officers, and social welfare departments, face budget deficits. The lack of sufficient funding, personnel, and equipment limits their ability to carry out anti-trafficking activities effectively. Similarly, shelters and support services for trafficking victims are scarce, and those that do exist struggle with limited resources, reducing their capacity to offer comprehensive care and rehabilitation. In an interview with a representative from a FARAJA working to support trafficking victims, she shared her concerns about the challenges faced by government agencies;

> "The agencies responsible for fighting trafficking are doing what they can, but they're sometimes under-resourced. We often work with police, social welfare, and immigration officers, but sometimes they lack basic resources, even transportation to reach rural areas where trafficking is rampant."

> "Shelters for victims are very few and they struggle to meet the basic needs of survivors. They can't offer the full range of support victims need, like psychological counseling or vocational training, because there isn't enough funding. This lack of resources hampers the effectiveness of the whole system."

Although Tanzanian laws include provisions for victim protection and support, in practice, services for trafficking victims are insufficient. There are very few shelters or rehabilitation centers available, and the existing ones often face budget deficits or are understaffed. As a result, many victims do not receive the comprehensive support they need to recover from their trauma and reintegrate into society. This lack of resources also affects the long-term support available to victims, such as vocational training and employment opportunities, leaving them vulnerable to re-trafficking or further exploitation. Additionally, foreign victims face even greater challenges due to language barriers and a lack of specific services tailored to their needs. In an interview with a social worker, she shared the challenges in providing adequate support to victims:

> " Many victims come to us traumatized, needing both physical and psychological care, but we don't always have the resources to give them the full support they need. Long-term care, like vocational training, is almost non-existent, which means survivors often leave here with no skills or opportunities, making them vulnerable to being trafficked again."

While there have been efforts to raise awareness about human trafficking, these initiatives are often insufficient or poorly implemented, particularly in rural areas where trafficking is most prevalent. Many communities lack understanding of what constitutes trafficking and victims are often unaware of their rights or the resources available to them. Prevention programs are also inconsistent, limiting their ability to address the root causes of trafficking, such as poverty,

unemployment, and lack of education. Without robust prevention efforts, vulnerable populations continue to be at risk of exploitation.

Conclusion

Tanzania's Tier 2 status in the U.S. Department of State's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report underscores that human trafficking remains a significant issue in the country, despite various efforts to combat it. Men, women, and children from both rural and urban areas continue to fall victim to trafficking, driven by socio-economic, cultural, and other structural factors. The Tanzanian government has implemented policies and legal instruments aimed at addressing human trafficking, yet the problem persists. This can be attributed to several gaps identified in the study, including budgetary constraints, inconsistent law enforcement, lack of public awareness, and insufficient victim support systems. To effectively combat human trafficking in Tanzania, it is imperative to address these challenges. Increasing funding for law enforcement agencies and victim support services will enhance the capacity to protect vulnerable populations. Strengthening oversight mechanisms to ensure consistent enforcement of anti-trafficking laws is also crucial. Moreover, broader public awareness campaigns are necessary to educate communities about the dangers and signs of trafficking, fostering prevention at the grassroots level. Further, a more comprehensive and coordinated approach is needed to fully implement Tanzania's anti-trafficking policies.

Recommendations

While Tanzania has made significant strides in developing policies to combat human trafficking, there is a notable gap in enforcement. The government should allocate more resources to law enforcement agencies, including specialized training for police, immigration officers, and border security personnel. Enhanced training would equip officials to identify traffickers and victims more effectively, ensuring that existing laws, such as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2008, are robustly implemented. Further, the Government should strengthen Coordination between law enforcement, judicial bodies, and social services to ensure that trafficking cases are effectively prosecuted and victims receive appropriate protection and rehabilitation.

Human trafficking in Tanzania is often transnational, with victims trafficked to or from neighboring countries. The government should collaborate more closely with regional and international bodies, such as the African Union and Interpol, to facilitate information sharing, joint operations, and coordinated responses to trafficking networks. This cross-border collaboration is essential for dismantling trafficking syndicates that exploit legal and jurisdictional loopholes.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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