A criminological study on obstacles to the response to human trafficking in Durban Metropolitan: Perceptions of frontline personnel

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking has plagued the rights of many people worldwide, and it has continually put their protection in jeopardy. Thus, a need to explore the challenges and barriers encountered by stakeholders such as the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) and non-government organisations (NGOs) to respond to this scourge remains essential. The study understood the obstacles to combating human trafficking in Durban Metropolitan through in-depth interviews. The findings of this study revealed loopholes in measurements of human trafficking; for instance, instability in partnerships of relevant stakeholders adversely impacts the fight against the menace of human trafficking. Also, current resources are perceived to be minimal to match the severity of this crime. As a recommendation, SAPS and NGOs should advance their technological capacities, and acquiring appropriate knowledge and regular training of officials should remain the focal point of any response to human trafficking. Moreover, technological advancement should match or surpass the sophistication in crime commission to rapidly identify human traffickers and victimisation instances.

Introduction

Human trafficking has been a lucrative crime for traffickers for many decades, and it consistently creates much devastation to the world’s peace and security. Human trafficking costs the world more, from its endeavours to lessen it, at least, to a bearable state, including apprehension that law enforcement makes and prosecution of traffickers (UN.Gift 2008:10). This crime has created a “global vibration alert”, and the world’s organisations should actively coordinate to efficiently reduce human trafficking (Konrad & Marques 2012; Foot 2020; Lagon 2015). It is unarguably a subject matter, according to this study, that there remains a variety of loopholes concerning combating human trafficking that require considerable attention from structures such as SAPS, other local stakeholders and various institutions around the world. The literature divulges that partnership has always been there in curbing human trafficking (Lagon 2015:21).

Nevertheless, the surge in human trafficking raises questions regarding these relationships and measurements’ effectiveness to curb this heinous crime. If the partnership were reliable enough, the world would not witness such a massive incidence of human trafficking.

The United States Department of State report has positioned South Africa and many other African member states on the tier 2 watch list, which places countries according to their determination to respond to human trafficking. On this level are countries that do not meet the minimum standard as stated by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 [TVPA]; however, their attempts are conspicuous (United States Department of State 2020). South Africa and many other developing countries fall under this category, which has been a case for consecutive years.

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Regardless of the visible development in data generation on human trafficking for the past 20 years (United States Department of State, 2020), it remains a significant challenge to tackle this crime as figures are still growing. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and Walk Free Foundation report (2017) estimate that in 2016, victims of modern-day slavery were approximately 40 million on any given day. Notably, out of this 40 million, 25 million were victims of forced labour, and 15 million were forced into marriages (ILO 2017). Interestingly, similar to Europe and America, human trafficking has engulfed the entire continent of Africa (Olutola & Bello 2020).

Since various studies approach human trafficking from many angles in terms of ideological interpretations and definitional problems (Chisolm-Straker, Baldwin, Gaïgbé-Togbé, Ndukwe, Johnson & Richardson 2016; Bello 2018; Wijkman & Kleemans 2019), a study that would narrow the focus to trafficking hubs such as Durban Metropolitan was of cardinal importance. In this paper, we endeavoured to comprehend obstacles encountered by SAPS and NGOs that stumbles their idea to grapple with human trafficking, predominantly in Durban Metropolitan. Using these organisations does not mean that other institutions whose mandate is to reduce human trafficking are not essential. However, the study had to choose those who worked with the SAPS to counter human trafficking.

The extent of human trafficking in South Africa is rigorously presented in the literature review, drawing from the existing literature. Moreover, the literature on the hindrances of combating human trafficking is assessed with much focus on the South African context. Stakeholders such as SAPS, anti-trafficking NGOs, Interpol, and human trafficking institutions, with the help of these recommendations, can apprehend, prosecute and convict traffickers. Moreover, policymakers can use the findings to draw policies, particularly in the study location.

This study aims to (i) assess the participants' views regarding the nature and extent of human trafficking in the Durban Metropolitan, (ii) to determine impediments that inhibit the SAPS and NGOs from responding effectively to human trafficking in the Durban Metropolitan. This study also questions:

i. What is the nature and extent of human trafficking in the Durban Metropolitan according to selected SAPS and NGO representatives' views?

ii. What are the challenges experienced by the SAPS and NGOs in their efforts to respond to the crime of human trafficking in the Durban Metropolitan?

**Literature Review**

**The scope of human trafficking in South Africa**

Most South Africans have ignored that human trafficking does exist in the country (Kempen, 2020). As Mollema (2013) points out, human trafficking operations dominate South African busiest cities such as Durban, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Bloemfontein, and Port Elizabeth. Van der Watt (2015) has supported claims that the scope of human trafficking in South Africa remains elusive. The author further submits that reported numbers of this scourge indicate that it is on the rise. Moreover, the human trafficking literature suggests that South Africa is not immune to this phenomenon. Victims are transported in, and some are taken out of the country (Nkosi 2018; United States Department of State 2020).

Some statistics may not reflect the true extent of this menace (Kempen, 2019), as the data on prosecutions of human trafficking and identified victims remains imprecise (US Department of State, 2019). The statistical data by the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (2014) shows that 62% of child victims were trafficked in Africa and the Middle East, South Asia and the Pacific had 36%; whereas figures in America were 31% and 18% in European countries and Central Asia.

As argued above, data on human trafficking in South Africa remains obscure; however, some available figures show that the menace does exist. According to Kempen (2019), data revealed by Lumka Cebo, a Resource Line Case Manager of the A21campaign, shows that between 2013 and 2018, the cases they dealt with include human trafficking for labour exploitation, which has reached 41% and trafficking for sexual exploitation that made up 39%. Moreover, Roper, Warria, Frankel, van der Wat, Makhubele and Marx (2020) reveal that between 9 August 2015 and 12 December 2017 SAPS Crime Administration System (CAS) recorded 2 132 cases of human trafficking. Fouty-nine of these cases were prosecuted with success, and 21 were prosecuted as child trafficking.

It is anticipated that figures may be imprecise due to that human trafficking is surreptitiously done as a way to avoid penance. Therefore, it would not be safe to conclude that this crime is not explosive in South Africa since traffickers are too cautious. Also, it is vital to note that some criminal offences go unreported for many reasons. A study by McGaha & Evans (2009) anchors the above argument by avowing that some victims prefer to remain unknown by not reporting the crime due to their fear of the trafficker or disbelief in law enforcement. Therefore, these determinants and many other unmentioned elements contribute to the lack of literature regarding the scope of human trafficking.

**Analysis of human trafficking in-depth: who can be trafficked?**

Human trafficking affects both genders, and men are also victims of trafficking, although the literature dwells much on child trafficking and trafficking in women. In this regard, OHCHR (2014) stressed that trafficking in women, men, and children occurs for various reasons, including forced and exploitative labour in factories, farms, and domestic services, sex trafficking, and forced
marriage. UNODC (2008) revealed that mostly traffickers prey on the poor, the isolated, and the vulnerable. Notably, disempowerment, marginalisation, and income inequality are the consequence of poor policies and practices that oppress many groups of the population, making them highly susceptible to crimes such as human trafficking (UNODC 2008). In Nigeria, Ukwai, Angioha and Aniah (2019) study discovered that victims who were extremely compelled by different socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment became motivated by the main target of organised crimes such as human trafficking.

However, the literature reveals that women are most likely to fall prey to human traffickers for sexual exploitation (Sanghera, 2015; Andrijasevic, 2020). The portrayal of women as the primary victims of trafficking does not mean men and children do not suffer due to human trafficking.

**Resources of human trafficking and understanding of human trafficking**

It should not be disregarded that the shortage of resources and inapplicability of laws in combating human trafficking remains the core determinants. In their argument, Farrell, Pfeffer and Bright (2015) say that the failure to understand human trafficking can adversely affect the application of human trafficking legislation. So far, law enforcement structures are not well-trained in human trafficking, and they fail to detect elements of this crime (Farrell & Reichert 2017). Combrinck, Connors, Jansen van Rensburg, Neoyini, Sithole and Tilley (2010) further state that limited knowledge of law enforcement officers regarding human trafficking has contributed to their struggle to apply pertinent laws.

An interesting argument made by Farrell, Owens and McDevitt (2014) indicates that stakeholders have detected few cases regardless of the availability of resources and attention towards fighting human trafficking. The ones that have undergone prosecution are limited compared to the extent of the problem. This study contends that the viability of resources for combating human trafficking is questionable. The focus should never be shifted to human resources since traffickers have recently become sophisticated; they can outsmart any invented measurement.

A study conducted by Irwin (2017) reveals that most police officers conflate human trafficking and smuggling. This supports an argument that front line workers in combating human trafficking have a limited understanding of this phenomenon.

**The non-governmental organisations: An aid to the police**

Unquestionably, NGOs role in fighting crime is immense, and it has grown massively in recent years throughout the world. The former Malaysian Deputy Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Noor Rashid Ibrahim, during the conference held in Aman (Kuala Lumpur) on 13 March 2018, emphasised the significance of coordinating with NGOs to counter human trafficking (Tee 2018). Tan Sri Noor Rashid Ibrahim suggested that victims are keener to disclose everything when talking to the NGOs personnel than when giving a statement to a police officer (ibid.). In the same vein, Geldenhuys (2017) submitted that a partnering approach comprising police and NGOs remains a vital measurement to responding to the scourge of human trafficking; the author considers NGOs a key player in the "policing" of human trafficking. According to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue [HMICFRS] (2017), a lack of mutual partnership against human trafficking limits relevant structures from comprehending risks and responding efficiently.

Mainly, NGOs are doing exceptionally well in terms of spreading awareness and ensuring that prevention is maintained. Valarmathi and Ramesh (2017) reveal that NGOs have worked tirelessly to spread awareness to the public through communication platforms such as journals, conferences, published newsletters, and establishing seminars that reach out to societies. NGOs have managed to abrogate some challenges encountered by governments due to human trafficking (Skillen 2016).

Like any other stakeholder, NGOs encounter challenges to reduce human trafficking. Skillen (2016) mentioned the language barrier, inability to function independently and limited resources to achieve their goals as the main challenges that hinder NGOs from rendering their services to victims of human trafficking. The hindering factors impact the service provision, and due to these challenges, NGOs are expected to rely on big organisations.

**Research and Methods**

**Approach and design**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to obtain valid information about SAPS officials and NGO personnel's perceptions of their agencies' responses to human trafficking. This study employed a phenomenological approach. According to Lichtman (2014) phenomenological approach seeks to understand the problem by exploring it from the views of real people who experience the phenomenon in real-life situations and understand the phenomenon more holistically. A qualitative approach's importance lies in its substantial yielding results and covering broad aspects of the research phenomenon (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest & Namey 2005). Likewise, Schoeman (2011) describes the qualitative approach as a research method involving participants obtaining all relevant facts and knowledge about the phenomenon.

This study understood the critical and sensitive issues that inform human trafficking. Thus, a qualitative research methodology was selected to minimise any breach of confidentiality and possibly a leak of sensitive information. Typically, meetings are held in private spaces in a qualitative research approach.
Notably, an exploratory research design was employed in this study. This study's exploratory nature involved eliciting the views of a relatively small SAPS and NGO sample to obtain their in-depth views on human trafficking in the Durban Metropolitan. As characterised by Burns and Grove (2001), exploratory research guides the researcher to new knowledge and finds new thoughts, and it helps expand the learning of the phenomenon. This suggests that expanding knowledge is the priority of this study. During the literature review process, it had been noted that, although various studies had been conducted on human trafficking, few had explored the efforts of the police and NGOs to fight against the scourge of human trafficking in Durban Metropolitan in particular.

**Target population**

The target population comprised SAPS officials who are experienced in conducting investigations on all forms of human trafficking. Moreover, all the personnel of the NGOs who have previously assisted the victims of any form of human trafficking and participated in human trafficking awareness campaigns in the Durban Metropolitan were part of the study.

**Inclusion and exclusion criteria**

A sample was selected from the two organisations involved in the study as specified above for practical purposes. Thus, experienced investigators who had worked in the organised crime unit for 13 to 15 years and NGO personnel who had worked in cases involving victims of human trafficking were selected.

Exclusion criteria are those features that may be revealed by the participants that could hinder the successful outcome of a study by affecting the study’s results (Talbot, 1995, in Samkange 2009). Thus, participants in the Organised Crime Unit who had investigated crimes unrelated to human trafficking and worked there for less than a year were excluded. Also, NGO personnel working with human trafficking cases and who worked there for less than a year were excluded from the study sample.

**Table 1: Years of experience of the participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research participant</th>
<th>Work experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PO 1</td>
<td>Between 13 and 15 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PO 2</td>
<td>Between 12 and 14 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO 3</td>
<td>Between 12 and 14 years</td>
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<td>PO 4</td>
<td>Between 13 and 15 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>PO 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO P1</td>
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<td>NGO P3</td>
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<td>NGO P5</td>
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*Not specified means that the data are available but are not recorded here at the participants' request.*

The participants are listed above to highlight the inclusion criteria in the study. This requirement was included to ensure that concrete and reliable data was obtained. Thus, participants' years of experience were recorded. The years of experience of the SAPS participants are presented to emphasise the reliability of the collected data. Nevertheless, years of NGO personnel experience are not indicated as they were not comfortable sharing this information during the interview.

**Sampling**

The study focused on the responses of SAPS officers and NGO personnel who had engaged in human trafficking issues in Durban Metropolitan. The sample was drawn from 10 participants, SAPS officials (five participants) and two NGOs (two from one and three from the other NGOs) situated in the Durban Metropolitan to involve workers who regularly engaged with offenders and victims. As this was a qualitative study, a non-probability sampling approach was used to fulfil purposive sampling assumptions.

**Data collection**

All ten in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted from three institutions comprising SAPS (human trafficking unit) and other anti-trafficking NGOs in Durban. Using purposive and snowball methods to aid this study maintained credibility and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon studied. Following the steps provided in a study by (Buyce & Neale 2006), the researcher conducted the IDIs.

In-depth interviews were conducted by the researcher on a one-on-one basis with SAPS detectives specialising in human trafficking cases and anti-trafficking NGO personnel on separate days and in a secured location in their working environment to increase the level of confidentiality. Notably, the conducted IDIs were characterised by open-ended questions that lasted about 20-50 minutes to gather as much information as the researcher could.
Ethical considerations

The study obtained ethical approval from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (protocol ref. no. HSS/1789/017M). Gatekeepers’ letters were attained from the SAPS national research unit and two anti-trafficking NGOs included in the study.

Before collecting data, an interviewer had to obtain consent from participants as an official agreement to participate in the study voluntarily. Each participant signed the form stipulating data collection steps, such as that the interview process would be recorded. For those who did not permit the recording of their responses, the interviewer noted down their interview.

Method of data analysis

This study adopted a thematic method to through with the collected information was transcribed, coded and analysed; therefore, employing this technique, recurring opinions or experiences were automatically discovered, coded and recorded as they were occurring. The themes that emerged in the data gathered were identified and written in chronological order (Alhojailan 2012); the researcher had to make sense of the collected data concerning the research questions and the study objectives. It was of cardinal importance to determine any matches or links. The data was accurately analysed and explained to make sense of it and present the problem understandably.

Results and Discussion

Results are presented under themes that emerged during the interviews, and these themes are four. Notably, we selected themes from the thesis relevant to the study’s topic. To elucidate the findings, the quotes from participants are included.

Lack of necessary resources

When asked about resources, participants from all organisations one accord claimed to be working with limited resources to respond to the scourge of human trafficking.

“As in any agency, there are various challenges, and our organisation has visible challenges. The shortage of required resources is one of the challenges that affects the organisation.” (PO-2).

Most participants recorded that shortage of resources has an adverse effect on how their organisation responds to human trafficking. Another participant said:

“The government is trying to deal with the crime by providing the criminal justice system with the relevant resources. Nevertheless, a lot is still needed because traffickers are clever and acting very fast; dealing with them needs much sophistication. Some vehicles are not at a good state to help us respond quickly to this crime” (PO-4).

With one accord, NGO staff members pointed to unfavourable resources as negatively impacting the combat against human trafficking.

“Our campaigns and interventions are positively contributing to the response of human trafficking; however, resources are dragging us down. We need to partner as NGOs and the society” (NGO P4).

It remains incontrovertible that the lack of government stakeholders’ resources has always been a challenging determinant in the fight against crime. Drawing from the literature, this study did anticipate such responses about the resources of SAPS and NGOs. It remains immutable that any feasible idea to counter human trafficking as a heinous crime should be supported with adequate resources, relevant skills, and recruiting of more experienced personnel. Yet, the availability of resources continues to be problematic for the most significant stakeholders. As some participants pointed to the shortage of vehicles as another challenge, emergencies would not get quick attention.

On the other hand, NGOs pointed toward limited resources as adversity that drags them back. Noticeably, NGOs’ and society's coordination is understood to be fragile, which could affect any idea to spread the message about human trafficking.

Current strategies

Of interest about this question is that responses were varied, suggesting that some participants were not clear about strategies that their agencies utilise to respond to the scourge of human trafficking. Understandably, there are no collaborative or focused strategies to curb the problem. If strategies for human trafficking are there, they may be erroneously implemented.

“We have involved ourselves with the government in awareness-raising to deal with the crime of human trafficking positively. The SAPS needs to get a capacity crime intelligence [unit] to identify the threat and visit brothels. Also to clamp down on police corruption better and border controls.” (PO-2).

Shortage of necessary resources could impact the effectiveness of strategies established to counter human trafficking. Responses highlight the deficiency in SAPS officials’ capability to detect the probable threat of human trafficking. Although SAPS is one of the organisations entrusted with a mandate to combat human trafficking, it involves itself with the government's strategic mission to
reduce this crime; however, officials are not well capacitated with skills and sufficient knowledge. Also, the comments generally revealed the need to strengthen partnerships in responding to human trafficking, which again refers to the point that concerted or rigorous information gathering resulting in intelligence-driven operations would be a positive step towards positively curbing human trafficking.

**Language barrier**

It became blatant that among actual challenges that participants encounter, the language barrier is at the fore and has existed for a long time. It somehow hinders SAPS investigations and service provision by NGOs to victims of human trafficking. In this regard, the language barrier seems to be a predominant issue when a victim of human trafficking is from another country. Of note, most responses point to the insufficient knowledge and understanding of foreign languages as victims of human trafficking are from different countries.

"The challenge lies in the language barrier because in most cases, victims are immigrants from countries that do not use English as their first language of communication." (PO-1)

It appears to be also challenging for anti-trafficking NGOs to help victims who speak foreign languages.

"Victims themselves being so fearful, not trust anyone, they do not disclose, and they do not want to do tests. Again, the language barrier is another challenge if we encounter a situation where we should assist the victim in speaking a foreign language. It becomes problematic because they would struggle to pronounce some words. Moreover, if the case needs a legal mind, we cannot help because we cannot provide the victims with that." (NGO P1)

As most of the responses concerning this question positioned it as a challenging determinant, it is incumbent that stakeholders regard it as a factor that requires prompt attention. Probably, institutions that cater to victims of human trafficking and the SAPS itself do not provide classes on foreign languages, and interpreters are not provided for cases that involve foreign nationals.

**Collaborative efforts to respond to human trafficking**

Interpol's mandate and vision regarding the response to heinous crimes such as human trafficking could be precise; however, they may be dawdling in practical nature. The finding claims that structures such as Interpol are delaying or rather fail to work with the police to respond swiftly to an incident of human trafficking.

"It is good. Stakeholders such as Interpol –international police mandated by the UN – are important, but I think we should strengthen the relationship even more. In some other cases, it is hard to investigate the cases outside the country because some procedures should be followed and that delaying process negatively impacts the whole process." (PO-5)

The NGO participants revealed a good relationship with the SAPS as they rely exclusively on this organisation for referrals.

"The partnership is perfect in the sense that we feel recognised. We get the invite if the SAPS is willing to implement something against human trafficking. Most importantly, we have become part of the task team comprising SAPS, DSD, anti-trafficking organisations and many other agencies, and we have a good working relationship [with them]." (NGO P1)

Coordination of SAPS and NGOs could be vital in responding to human trafficking, but it also remains essential to adopt a collective response. All relevant stakeholders that respond to human trafficking, such as SAPS, NGOs, National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) and society, should collaborate, notably from all levels. As participants indicated, NGOs are working well with SAPS, but SAPS is the only organisation they coordinate with; NGOs are expected to work with various other organisations for learning purposes and detect human trafficking cases to rescue victims independently.

**Understanding of human trafficking legislation**

Participants find legislation relevant; however, they are uncertain about their law enforcement viability.

"The legislation is adequate, but it needs to be enforced in policing units." (PO-2).

Some participants pointed to the limited understanding police have about human trafficking legislation and the necessity to train police on this legislation.

"I might say it is adequate; the strength is needed in the implementation phase. Police at the police station level are not educated in these legislations. They should be educated to detect human trafficking-related incidents because in most cases, the incident is first reported to them before it reaches our offices as investigators. Again, society plays a huge role in fighting crime; in that way, we need them, so the legislation should create ways we could fully work with society." (PO-4)

Police at all levels are expected to understand the laws of human trafficking to collaborate well with investigators and other relevant structures regarding cases. Participants alluded that legislation is there; however, it is only taught to other structures other than them. For example, police at the police station level do not know or understand the legislation. They emphasised the importance of every structure's inclusion as a response to this crime involving every SAPS level.
Minimal knowledge regarding human trafficking

Among other challenging determinants, limited knowledge and understanding of human trafficking are a massive problem among police. The findings highlight that some police officials cannot identify a human trafficking case.

"Police at the police station level are not educated in these legislations. They should be educated to detect human trafficking-related incidents because the incident in most cases is firstly reported to them before it reaches our offices as investigators." (PO-4)

"There is a huge need that police in all structures are fully trained to be able to detect crimes such as human trafficking at all levels. Again, police should be completely educated on how they may apply the legislation in their level because one legislation could be applied differently by different structures making up the criminal justice system of the country." (PO-2)

Farrell, McDevitt and Fahy (2008) argue that local law enforcement officers should be the most reliable source for identifying human trafficking crimes, as they are working within communities. Seemingly, it is not the case in Durban Metropolitan as far as combating human trafficking is concerned. Another participant revealed that some police officials at the police station level would regard human trafficking cases as "missing person" cases, making it more challenging for human trafficking investigators to attend to such a case quickly. The study conducted by Ross, Dimitrova, Howard, Dewey, Zimmerman and Oram (2015) has alluded that training is required — especially for maternity staff, on recognising and addressing the needs of victims, which include making safe referrals. Every related stakeholder must receive sufficient training on human trafficking before providing service to victims or identifying traffickers in the case of police.

The rate of awareness of this crime among ordinary communities, where most victims are recruited, is low, necessitating more public awareness campaigns. Human trafficking is inhumane, and it primarily involves the trafficking of people – including children – for sexual and labour exploitation both within and beyond national borders.

The barriers that SAPS and non-governmental organisations face in their efforts to combat human trafficking are intrusive and destructive. According to the results of this study, one factor that has contributed substantially to the SAPS and NGOs' failure to respond to human trafficking adequately is a shortage of resources.

Policy Recommendations

The organisation should have enough vehicles to respond to any incident and immediate situations, and hiring many adequately trained staff members would be a solution because, as things stand, less than ten human trafficking investigators are working in Durban.

Dissemination of information is also vital in responding to human trafficking. Report writing becomes significant in this regard, as reports written and timeously submitted via the internet to investigators regarding suspicious cases could be an essential strategy in locating victims of trafficking before they are securely hidden or taken across borders. There is an imperative need to render government departments' operational efforts rotationally to disseminate information cyclically. This should occur particularly among departments such as the Department of Home Affairs, the Department of Social Development, and the SAPS Organised Crime Unit. The circulation of information can reveal potential suspects and syndicates, and it can assist in identifying victims of trafficking.

Conclusion

This article has argued that many stumbling blocks have an adverse effect on the response of stakeholders to this heinous crime; such obstacles include the shortage of resources and poor communication among relevant structures. This crime has manifested itself in big cities such as Durban, and appropriate structures such as SAPS and anti-trafficking NGOs are not matching traffickers' sophistication. Shortage of resources, poor relationship between SAPS and other structures, and limited knowledge of human trafficking by most officials in the SAPS organisation have played a significant role in increasing this crime. No studies are focusing on the response of stakeholders, predominantly SAPS and NGOs, to human trafficking in Durban Metropolitan.

Another blatant factor contributing to the upsurge in human trafficking is the broken partnership between SAPS and Interpol. Interpol is anticipated to go an extra mile in promoting apprehension and investigations, particularly, for sensitive crimes such as human trafficking. However, responses exhibit the organisation's incompetence in ensuring that foreign traffickers are investigated and eventually apprehended.

Arguably, there is a dire possibility that the human trafficking problem will escalate without sufficient resources. Therefore, structures such as the SAPS and NGOs in the Durban area must be provided with the necessary resources, including vehicles, technological devices, and human resources. Therefore, the government should ensure that the SAPS budget is sufficient to support these structures, whereas private enterprises should open their huge pockets to support NGOs.

The absence of the voices of victims of trafficking would have an adverse effect on the depth of the data gathered. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the victims representatives would compromise the study's scope, and it is identified as a suggestion for future research.

Though this study has addressed various angles, such as the coordination among stakeholders and shortage of resources in the fight against human trafficking, more research is needed. Future studies should be directed toward technological advancement to regulate
the illegal entry and exit from port facilities in Durban, such as Durban Harbour and Ushaka Airport Durban. The influence of society in combating trafficking has been mentioned several times in this discourse. The study, however, did not include the perspectives of community members and victims themselves. Hence, it is suggested that related research be carried out, but the sample should be drawn from societies most affected and traumatised by human trafficking. People's perspectives, responses and suggestions could then be used to understand human trafficking, enabling law enforcement and other stakeholders to unravel and eventually end human trafficking.

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Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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