INFLUENCE OF CURRENT MIGRATION POLICIES ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING PATTERNS IN GARISSA COUNTY, KENYA (2019 – 2024)

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ABSTRACT

Human trafficking has become a growing concern in migration management, prompting governments to implement policies aimed at mitigating associated risks. This research explored the impact of migration regulations on human trafficking trends in Garissa County, Kenya. The study aimed to assess how existing migration policies influence the occurrence of human trafficking along the Kenya-Somalia border in Garissa County. Grounded in the Transnational Organized Crime and Migration Systems theories, the study utilized a cross-sectional survey approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The research targeted 466 participants, selecting a sample of 215. Data collection involved structured questionnaires and interviews, with a pilot study conducted to ensure reliability. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics, while qualitative data was examined thematically. Findings indicated that migration policies provide some protection against trafficking but are undermined by enforcement challenges, including porous borders, resource constraints, corruption, inadequate training, and weak cross-border collaboration. Restrictive policies also inadvertently pushed migrants toward irregular routes, increasing vulnerability. While policies are effective at manned border points, their overall impact is weakened by structural gaps and outdated frameworks. The study recommended strengthening enforcement through increased funding, capacity building, improved coordination with Somali authorities, and regular policy updates to address evolving trafficking dynamics.

Key Words: Legislation and Regulatory Frameworks, Enforcement Mechanisms, Institutional Capacity, Interagency Coordination

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades, the issue of human trafficking has generated significant global interest, marked by increased media coverage and a surge in anti-trafficking activism, prompting most countries to develop new policies, laws, and enforcement measures to address it. However, definitional challenges plague both policy and scholarly discussions on human trafficking. This is so because some authors have defined human trafficking based on its processes. Allain (2017) defines trafficking as a process that results in various outcomes instead of an end state. According to Sharma (2023), human trafficking can be described as a consequence of a vicious cycle, driven by a complex interplay of social and economic issues that continuously influence and exacerbate one another. These perspectives underscore the complexity of human trafficking, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies that address each stage of the trafficking process. Other authors have defined human trafficking based on means used and processes. For example, Hayes (2016) human trafficking is described as the act of enlisting, transferring, transferring, deliberate harbouring or reception of persons. Further, he characterized human trafficking through means used such as through the use of threats; coercion; abduction; deception, and abuse of power. According to Wooditch and Steverson (2023), human trafficking is a form of modern servitude that involves the illegal transportation of persons through deceit or force, intending to subject them to sexual exploitation, labour, or other activities that financially benefit others. For this study, human trafficking was defined as deceiving, recruiting, transporting, and transferring persons with the aim of exploitation and financial gain.

In a period of unprecedented globalization, migration across international borders has become an integral facet of the interconnected world (Robertson & Buhari-Gulmez, 2016). While migration, driven by factors such as economic opportunities, education, and the search for a better life, has undoubtedly facilitated cultural exchange and economic growth, it has also brought forth unintended consequences (Flahaux & De Haas, 2016). According to Kotiswaran (2019), one of the profound challenges accompanying this increased mobility is the alarming rise in human trafficking. As individuals traverse borders in search of new horizons, the vulnerabilities inherent in migration processes, as argued by Elliott (2019), have created opportunities for criminal networks to exploit, leading to the egregious crime of human trafficking. In recognition of these threats, countries around the globe have responded by formulating and implementing migration policies designed to manage migration issues and mitigate the risks associated with trafficking (Avdan, 2017). These policies seek to achieve a careful equilibrium between fostering the benefits of global movement and safeguarding individuals from falling victim to exploitation and abuse. This study thus, pursued to interrogate the impact of immigration regulations on illicit human smuggling.

Globally, governments and international organizations have implemented various policies and initiatives to govern the movement of people. The United Kingdom's migration policy has undergone significant changes over the years, with a focus on controlling and restricting immigration (Boiko, 2020). This has included a shift towards assimilation rather than integration and a tightening of rules for entry and residence, particularly in response to the European migration crisis and Brexit (Okhoshin, 2020). The tightening of regulations concerning immigration and asylum has created an environment characterized as either 'hostile' or 'compliant' in the last few decades (Clayton & Firth, 2021). During this period, the evolution of asylum legislation has increasingly emphasized deterrence, as evidenced by recent policy and legislative statements that explicitly support the use of confinement, enforced dispersals, and deportations as means of discouraging new immigrants (Bloch 2020). However, the implementation of stringent migration policies may inadvertently increase the vulnerability of migrants. In addition, stricter border control measures may force the migrants to turn to intermediaries to facilitate their migration, hence, exposing them to riskier routes and criminal activities including human trafficking.

South Africa's migration policy is influenced by a complex interplay of global and regional factors (Palmary & de Gruchy, 2019). The current migration policy in South Africa is expressed through the 2017 White Paper

on International Migration, which was generated by the DHA. The migration policy outlines six key approaches which include: uprooting a system which perpetuates irregular migration, identifies the challenge of national perspectives regarding migration, addressing gaps between the country's legislations and SADC objectives, seeks to terminate a system that propagates colonial forms of trade and labour production, seeks to encourage high skilled immigration as well as providing employment preferences to nationals. South Africa's migration policy, though theoretically balanced, often leans more towards deterrence and enforcement in its practical application. Maunganidze *et al*. (2021) argue that one of the effects of enforcing the migration policies is detention which has been demonstrated to be ineffective in deterring migration. Instead, it compels migrants to take greater risks, which can be associated with an increase in human trafficking. Consequently, this strategy may undermine other migration management goals, such as case resolution, resource allocation, and the efficiency of court systems.

The National Labour Migration Policy aims to tackle the impacts and challenges of migration while aligning its objectives with global commitments. The policy was drafted to serve as a comprehensive roadmap to effectively manage and respond to the impacts of migration within the country, considering both international and regional perspectives (IOM, 2018). However, the failure of adherence and enforcement of the policy has continued to expose A significant number of Kenyan migrant laborers, especially in the Middle East, have faced abuse, mistreatment, and fatalities (KIPRA, 2023). To bridge this policy loophole, the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs, in 2022, suggested a temporary suspension on the hiring of domestic workers in Saudi Arabia. The proposal was rejected by the Ministry of Labour arguing that the local job market cannot provide employment to all domestic workers (KIPRA, 2023). This evident lack of coordination between government ministries and agencies presents a weak link in implementing the policy, leading to a situation where migrants might become vulnerable to exploitation and human trafficking. Therefore, research aimed to investigate the... influence of migration policies on human trafficking patterns in Garissa County, Kenya.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the implementation of policy frameworks such as the National Migration Policy (NMP) 2019, National Labour Migration Policy 2023, and the National Diaspora Policy 2014, human trafficking remains a persistent issue along the Kenya-Somalia border, particularly in Garissa County. The region's vast and porous border complicates efforts to monitor and control illegal crossings, creating opportunities for traffickers to exploit these vulnerabilities. Additionally, the remote and sparsely populated areas around Garissa County, coupled with limited resources, insufficient training, and pervasive corruption within local law enforcement, further undermine anti-trafficking initiatives. Reports by organizations like Freedom Collaboration and Stop the Traffik Kenya have highlighted Garissa County as a critical transit point for human trafficking, with multiple identified routes. Notably, traffickers have been found collaborating with aid workers at the Dadaab Refugee Camp to identify potential victims. These challenges raise significant concerns about the effectiveness of current migration policies in mitigating human trafficking within this context. Given Garissa County's strategic location and its role as a key transit route for migrants, refugees, and refugees from Somalia and adjacent nations, there is an urgent necessity to assess the efficiency of current immigration regulations. This study aimed at investigating how these policies influence human trafficking patterns and identify the enforcement challenges that hinder their success. The findings are expected to inform policy improvements and enhance the effectiveness of anti-trafficking strategies in the region.

Research objective

To examine the influence of current migration policies on the prevalence of human trafficking at the Kenya-Somalia border in Garissa County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Influence of migration policies on prevalence of human trafficking

A number of studies have examined the relationship between migration policy and human trafficking. A study by the Bradley (2017) found that strict migration policies can enhance the susceptibility of migrants to exploitation, including human trafficking. The study also found that more open migration policies can also increase the exposure of migrants to human trafficking, but in different ways. Another study, by the (UNODC) (2019) found that there is a clear link between migration and human trafficking. The study also found that migration policies can contribute to either increasing or decreasing the susceptibility of migrants to human trafficking.

Perez (2023) analyzed the potential consequences of The UK Policy Statement on the Points-Based Immigration System., particularly the risks of heightened exploitation by organized crime. By synthesizing data, reports, and expert analyses, the study concluded that the new immigration system could increase the vulnerability of EU nationals and other at-risk groups to human trafficking. This risk was linked to the absence of visa requirements for visitors and the inability to apply for work visas after entering the UK. While the study focused on the vulnerabilities created by the UK's immigration system, there is a need of exploring how similar migration policies influence the prevalence of human trafficking in different regional contexts, particularly in border areas like Garissa County, Kenya.

Yousaf (2017) explored the intricate dynamics of forced migration and human trafficking within Pakistan, focusing on the vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, particularly women, during their migration journeys. The study critiqued traditional state-centric migration and trafficking policies for neglecting the human insecurities that often drive forced migration. Using a qualitative approach, the research involved fieldwork and interviews with 50 trafficking victims and 25 officials from government agencies and NGOs. The findings revealed that inadequate policies and insufficient humanitarian interventions contribute to trafficking networks exploiting migrants' vulnerabilities in both source and host nations. However, there is need to understand how specific migration policies impact the prevalence of human trafficking in other contexts.

Muhammad (2021) conducted a study examining the challenge of unauthorized migration and its impact on Nigeria's national security, with a specific emphasis on the North West region. The study employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a literature review to gather relevant data on the historical context, conceptual framework, and effects of irregular migration. The findings of the study indicated that irregular migration has increased significantly in Nigeria, particularly in the North West, influenced by factors such as poverty, political instability, and inadequate border management. The study concluded that sustainable solutions must also focus on education and socio-economic development to tackle the underlying factors of unauthorized migration and enhance national security. However, the study provided a limited exploration of the influence of current migration policies on the prevalence of human trafficking and also primarily focused on Nigeria, lacking a comparative analysis on how migration policies impact human trafficking dynamics in different contexts, particularly in regions facing similar migration challenges.

Bahlbi (2016) investigated the connection between state migration policies and the increase in human trafficking, particularly the shift of smugglers into traffickers in Eastern Sudan. The study argued that human trafficking reflects the legal and political shortcomings of both origin and host countries. The findings indicated that restrictive migration policies contributed to the transforming of smugglers into human traffickers, thereby worsening the human trafficking crisis. While Bahlbi (2016) identifies the role of restrictive migration policies in intensifying human trafficking in Eastern Sudan, there was a need to explore how these dynamics play out at the Kenya-Somalia border, particularly in Garissa County.

Mohamed (2018) aimed to examine the effect of Kenya's immigration policy on human trafficking along the Kenya-Somalia border, specifically in Garissa Town, Garissa County. The research specifically aimed to

determine whether the implementation of the policy had an effect on the number of human trafficking cases. The study employed a descriptive research design and targeted security officers, immigration officials, Judges and Prosecutors, with a sample size of 113 respondents. The findings indicated that despite the existence of clear migration policies, their effectiveness in curbing human trafficking remains limited due to gaps in formulation, enactment, and execution. Socio-economic factors were identified as key drivers of human trafficking, both facilitating its occurrence and hindering enforcement efforts. Additionally, numerous challenges including corruption and inadequate resources obstructed the implementation of migration policies aimed at combating human trafficking. While this study evaluated whether migration policies reduced human trafficking cases, emphasizing policy implementation., this current study further sought to investigate how migration policies shaped trafficking patterns, offering insights into the unintended consequences and enforcement dynamics.

Theoretical Framework

Transnational Organized Crime Theory
The theory of transnational organized crime (TOC) proposed by Phil Williams in his 2001 work, Phil focuses on the "criminal enterprise" model, emphasizing the economic motivations and organizational structures of TOC groups, viewing them as businesses that exploit globalized opportunities for profit. Williams defines TOC as criminal activities that transcend national boundaries, involving networks and organizations that operate across multiple jurisdictions. TOC is characterized by its organized nature, involving hierarchical structures, strategic alliances, and the exploitation of global opportunities (Vlassis & Williams, 2013). According to the theory, there are several factors that contribute to TOC, including globalization, weak governance, and economic inequalities. Globalization has facilitated the movement of goods, services, and people, creating opportunities for criminal organizations to expand their operations. Weak states, particularly those in transition or with limited capacity, provide fertile ground for TOC to flourish (Williams, 2018).

The theory emphasizes the shift from hierarchical structures to sprawling transnational networks, particularly evident in Russian criminal organizations (Williams, 2001). This transformation is attributed to globalization and technological advancements, enabling criminal groups to operate across borders more efficiently (Madsen, 2018). Williams argues that these networks pose significant challenges to individual states, especially those in transition or developing economies, and to international governance (Williams, 2002). The theory explores various aspects of transnational crime, including cybercrime, arms trafficking, and human exploitation (Vlassis & Williams, 2013). It also examines the complex relationships between criminal networks, ethnic minorities, and legitimate businesses. To combat these evolving threats, the theory advocates for strengthened international cooperation, institutional reforms, and the development of counter-network strategies (Vlassis & Williams, 2013). The theory is applicable to this study as it helps to explain how human trafficking networks exploit weak enforcement, policy gaps, and border vulnerabilities, adapting their operations in response to restrictive migration policies and inadequate cross-border collaboration.

Migration Systems Theory
Mabogunje's migration-systems theory, introduced in 1970, provides a framework for understanding migration as a dynamic and interconnected process influenced by various factors. This theory posits that migration is not merely a result of individual decisions but is shaped by a complex system of interactions between different elements, including migrants, sending and receiving communities, and broader socio-economic and political environments. Mabogunje (1970) further contends that migration is an unpredictable occurrence, with the majority of migrants traveling through geographically concentrated routes connecting their points of origin and destinations. The individuals' migration decisions are shaped by the anticipated or actual earnings disparity between the migrant's departure location and their intended destination. According to Massey *et al.* (1993), the theory is part of a broader theoretical landscape explaining both the initiation and

perpetuation of international migration, alongside neoclassical economic theory, dual labor market framework, and global systems theory.

The theory highlights how migration at one point in time can affect subsequent movements. This feedback loop is crucial in understanding why migration continues between specific destinations over time (Bakewell, 2024). In addition, the theory underscores the interaction between migration systems and the wider environment, which includes economic, social, and political factors. These interactions are complex and require a systems-thinking approach to fully understand their dynamics (Tagliacozzo *et al*., 2023). Moreover, the theory proposes that the increasing intricacy of migration management requires a strategy that recognizes the interconnectedness of various systems. This complexity-based approach is essential for capturing the nuances of migration systems and their linkages with the wider environment (Tagliacozzo *et al*., 2023).

While Mabogunje's migration-systems theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding migration, it is important to recognize that migration theories are context-dependent and may not fully capture the diversity of migration experiences across different regions and time periods (Pérez *et al*., 2024). Migration-Systems Theory is relevant to this study by illustrating how migration policies, socio-economic conditions, and enforcement mechanisms interact to shape human trafficking patterns, with restrictive policies unintentionally driving irregular migration and increasing vulnerability to traffickers.
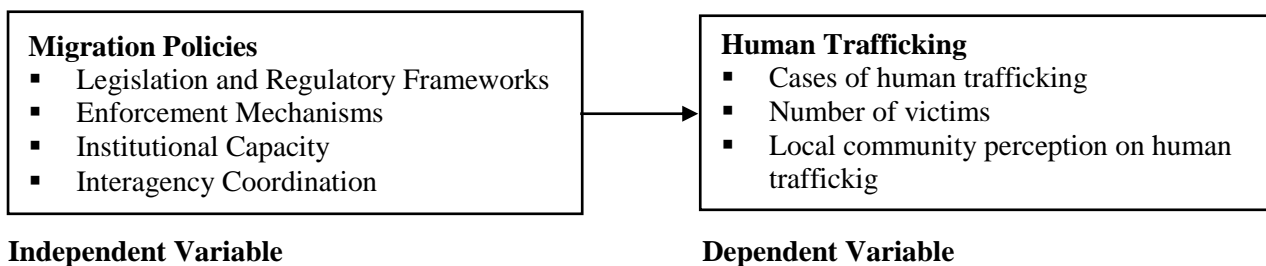
Conceptual Framework

Migration Policies ▪ Legislation and Regulatory Frameworks ▪ Enforcement Mechanisms ▪ Institutional Capacity ▪ Interagency Coordination	→	**Human Trafficking** ▪ Cases of human trafficking ▪ Number of victims ▪ Local community perception on human traffickig

Independent Variable   **Dependent Variable**

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a cross-sectional survey integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches in a study (Sharma *et al*., 2023). The research was carried out in Garissa County in Kenya. The target population comprised of immigration officials, border patrol police officers, community leaders, Non-Governmental Organizations, and Dadaab Refugee Camp workers.

In this research, respondents were chosen using a purposive sampling technique, targeting five specific groups: immigration officials, Border Patrol Police officers, community leaders, NGO officials and refugee camp workers. To determine the sample size, Israel (2009) formula was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$$

Where N = Population Size

n = Sample Size

e = Precision level (Sampling error, expressed in percentage + 5%

Therefore, the sample size for this study was:

$$n = \frac{466}{1+466(0.05^2)}$$

$$= \frac{466}{2.165}$$

$$= 215$$

Therefore, the sample size is 215 respondents. Proportionally allocating the sample size of 215 respondents among the different strata: 215/466 = 0.461. From each stratum, 46.1% of the population was selected.

The study employed a structured questionnaire to gather data from refugee camp workers. A pilot study was done and it involved 21 respondents (representing 10% of the actual sample size) drawn from the target population (immigration officials, Border Patrol Police officers, community leaders, and refugee camp workers) in Marsabit County to ensure the research instrument has content validity.

To assess the validity of the research instruments, the researcher sought guidance from the supervisor to confirm their alignment with the study's purpose and objectives. In addition, the researcher conducted a thorough literature review on migration policies and human trafficking before formulating the questions hence ensuring that the questions were relevant. This study considered a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.7 or above as evidence of the research instrument's reliability.

Qualitative responses were reviewed for clarity, and any unclear or ambiguous responses were clarified where necessary. Quantitative responses were entered into SPSS version 27 for analysis. Categorical responses were coded numerically to facilitate statistical computation. Qualitative data were transcribed and organized thematically based on key issues emerging from the responses.

RESULTS

Questionnaire Return Rate
The study attained an 84.6% response rate, with 88 questionnaires dully filled and returned while 16 questionnaires representing 15.4% were not dully completed/returned. As stated by Mugenda and Mugenda (2010), a response rate of 50% is regarded as sufficient, whereas a rate above 70% is classified as excellent. Therefore, the response rate attained in this research was deemed satisfactory for analysis.

Influence of current migration policies on the prevalence of human trafficking
The initial objective aimed to assess the impact of existing immigration policies on the occurrence of human trafficking along the Kenya-Somalia border in Garissa County. Respondents were requested to express their level of agreement with statements regarding the effect of immigration policies on the frequency of human trafficking. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Influence of current migration policies on prevalence of human trafficking

SD = Strongly Disagree D = Disagree U = Neutral   A = Agree SA = Strongly Agree

Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA	Mean	Std. dev
The migration policies effectively reduce the occurrence of human trafficking along the border.	1	11.5	14.4	37.5	35.6	3.95	1.03
Migration policies effectively protect individuals from falling victim to human trafficking	1.9	10.6	13.5	39.4	34.6	3.94	1.04
The enforcement of migration policies in Garissa County is sufficient to deter human traffickers.	1.9	8.7	6.7	33.7	49	4.19	1.02
Restrictive migration policies can inadvertently increase vulnerability to human trafficking.	2.9	4.8	4.8	38.5	49	4.26	0.97
Migration policies are clear and well-understood by the relevant enforcement agencies.	1.9	1.9	2.9	44.2	49	4.37	0.80
The collaboration between migration authorities and other stakeholders is effective in reducing human trafficking at the Kenya-Somalia border.	4.8	9.6	8.7	33.7	43.3	4.01	1.16
Migration policies protect the dignity of all individuals, regardless of their origin.	7.7	9.6	7.7	45.2	29.8	3.80	1.19
Mean						**4.07**	**1.03**

This section discusses the findings on the influence of immigration regulations on the occurrence of human trafficking along the Kenya-Somalia border in Garissa County. A blended research approach was utilized, integrating numerical data from structured responses with descriptive insights from key informant interviews. The findings are organized into three sections: quantitative findings, qualitative findings, and integration and synthesis.

The quantitative findings, as shown in Table 1, indicate that migration policies are perceived to play a significant role in reducing human trafficking at the Kenya-Somalia border. Respondents strongly agreed that these policies effectively reduce trafficking occurrences (mean = 3.95, SD = 1.03) and protect individuals from falling victim to traffickers (mean = 3.94, SD = 1.04). These high mean scores reflect a general belief in the policies' effectiveness, though the relatively high standard deviations suggest some variability in responses, potentially due to differing levels of policy enforcement across the region.

Enforcement of migration policies in Garissa County was rated the highest in terms of agreement, with a mean score of 4.19 (SD = 1.02). This finding highlights the perceived adequacy of enforcement mechanisms in deterring human traffickers. However, respondents also acknowledged the unintended consequences of restrictive migration policies, which were rated with a mean score of 4.26 (SD = 0.97). This indicates that while stricter policies aim to control trafficking, they may inadvertently increase vulnerabilities by pushing individuals toward irregular migration routes.

The clarity and understanding of migration policies among enforcement agencies were also strongly affirmed (mean = 4.37, SD = 0.80). This suggests that well-communicated policies contribute to more effective implementation. Collaboration between migration authorities and stakeholders was perceived as moderately effective (mean = 4.01, SD = 1.16), indicating room for improvement in multi-stakeholder coordination. Lastly, respondents expressed mixed views on the extent to which migration policies protect the dignity of all individuals, with the lowest mean score of 3.80 (SD = 1.19).

These findings demonstrate that migration policies in Garissa County significantly influence human trafficking patterns, necessitating their effective enforcement to curb trafficking activities. It is also evident that while these policies have contributed to reducing trafficking and enhancing security, their restrictive nature has inadvertently pushed some individuals toward irregular migration routes, increasing their vulnerability. As a result, the implementation of well-balanced migration policies remains crucial in mitigating trafficking while safeguarding human rights. The qualitative information gathered through key informant interviews supported the quantitative findings, providing insights into the influence of migration policies, highlighting details that complement the quantitative results. Thematic analysis of key informant interviews revealed two major themes: the effectiveness and limitations of migration policies and the unintended consequences of restrictive policies.

Migration policies have demonstrated some success in controlling human trafficking, particularly along monitored border points. As one key informant highlighted:

> *"The migration policies have to some extent contributed to controlling human trafficking along the border points. However, there are still some loopholes that are exploited by the traffickers."* (KI1)

This indicates that while policies play a role in curbing trafficking, their effectiveness is undermined by specific gaps that traffickers exploit. Another informant emphasized the difficulties presented by the expansive and porous nature of borders, which limits the full implementation and impact of these policies:

> *"Not really, because the Kenya-Somali border is quite expansive, and it will not be correct to attribute an impact on human trafficking to the policies. Apart from the policies, we have issues like porous nature of the border which requires more resources to be deployed besides the policies in place, so that they can be effective."* (K13)

This suggests that structural challenges, such as the lack of adequate resources and infrastructure, significantly limit the ability of migration policies to combat trafficking effectively.

Restrictive migration policies, while designed to control movement and deter trafficking, often result in unintended consequences that exacerbate the problem. One key informant explained how restrictive measures push individuals to seek irregular migration routes, increasing their reliance on smugglers and traffickers:

> *"The current migration policies are restrictive in nature, which often limits legal avenues for movement. This has an effect of pushing individuals to seek irregular routes and relying on smugglers or traffickers."*
> (KI2)

These policies inadvertently create conditions that traffickers exploit, thus increasing the vulnerability of migrants. Another informant elaborated on how stricter policies, though aimed at controlling migration, can unintentionally lead to higher incidences of trafficking activities:

> *"I am of the idea that the current migration policies are restrictive in nature which often limits legal avenues for movement. This has an effect of pushing individuals to seek irregular routes and relying on smugglers or traffickers and this increases their vulnerability to exploitation and human trafficking. While stricter policies are aimed at controlling migration, they can unintentionally increase the incidences of human trafficking activities."*
> (K12)

This finding highlights the paradoxical effect of restrictive migration policies, which, while seeking to curb irregular migration, may unintentionally play a role in the widespread occurrence of human trafficking by limiting safe and legal migration options.

Both data sources emphasize the critical role of enforcement in reducing trafficking. Quantitative results show strong agreement on the sufficiency of enforcement mechanisms (mean = 4.19, SD = 1.02), which aligns with qualitative insights that enforcement has contributed to reducing trafficking at border points. For instance, a key informant stated:

> *"The migration policies have to some extent contributed to controlling human trafficking along the border points."* (K11)

However, the findings also reveal significant limitations in the policies. Structural issues such as the porous nature of the border, mentioned in qualitative interviews, are not explicitly covered in the numerical data but are critical to understanding the challenges of enforcement. As noted by one participant:

> *"Apart from the policies, we have issues like porous nature of the border which requires more resources to be deployed besides the policies in place."* (K13)

Both data sources highlight the unintended consequences of restrictive migration policies. Quantitative findings indicate strong agreement that restrictive policies increase vulnerabilities (mean = 4.26, SD = 0.97), and qualitative insights elaborate on how these restrictions drive individuals toward irregular migration routes. This underscores the need for a balanced approach that addresses both enforcement and the provision of legal migration avenues.

These findings demonstrate that while migration policies have played a role in controlling human trafficking along monitored border points, their effectiveness is limited by structural and logistical challenges. The expansive and porous nature of the Kenya-Somalia border presents a significant obstacle to policy enforcement, requiring additional resources and infrastructure to enhance their impact. Additionally, restrictive migration policies, though intended to curb trafficking, have had unintended consequences by driving individuals toward irregular migration routes, thereby increasing their vulnerability to traffickers. The

qualitative data highlights that traffickers exploit policy gaps and restricted legal avenues for movement, exacerbating the very problem these policies seek to address. Therefore, while migration policies contribute to controlling trafficking, their effectiveness is undermined by enforcement challenges and unintended side effects that necessitate a more comprehensive approach.

The findings align with existing empirical literature on the complex relationship between migration policies and human trafficking. Similar to Bradley (2017) and Bahlbi (2016), the findings highlight the unintended consequences of restrictive migration policies, which can increase vulnerability to human trafficking by pushing individuals toward irregular migration routes. This resonates with the observation in Camp (2020) that restrictive policies can heighten exploitation risks due to limited legal migration avenues. Additionally, the qualitative findings in this study align with Yousaf's (2017) critique of state-centric policies that fail to address the structural challenges driving forced migration, such as resource limitations and border porosity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The objective was to examine the influence of current migration policies on the prevalence of human trafficking. The study concluded that migration policies along the Kenya-Somalia border in Garissa County were moderately effective in addressing human trafficking. While these policies were generally perceived to reduce trafficking, protect individuals, and were clearly understood by enforcement agencies, there are still some gaps in collaboration, communication, and addressing unintended consequences of restrictive measures. The findings therefore underscore the importance of refining these policies to enhance their impact while safeguarding human dignity. Structural challenges, such as the porous border and resource constraints, further complicate the effectiveness of these policies, necessitating a more holistic approach that incorporates additional resources and collaborative efforts. Overall, while migration policies contribute to deterring traffickers, their restrictive nature can inadvertently increase vulnerability, highlighting the need for balanced, inclusive, and comprehensive strategies.

The provision of adequate resources is critical for effective enforcement of migration policies. This is because resource constraints such as limited personnel, outdated equipment, and lack of funding hinder efforts to combat human trafficking. The study therefore recommends that there is need of increased funding, equipping law enforcement agencies with enough personnel and surveillance tools to strengthen enforcement capabilities.

Human trafficking is a transnational issue that requires cooperation between neighbouring countries. The poor is coordination with Somali authorities undermines the effectiveness of Kenyan migration policies. The research consequently suggests that the Kenyan government ought to foster cross-border collaboration through intelligence-sharing frameworks and coordinated operations between the two countries to disrupt the human trafficking networks.

The ODPP, Judiciary, and the Kenya National Police Service should work together to strengthen inter-agency coordination by creating a specialized anti-trafficking task force that brings together law enforcement, immigration officials, and judicial officers to streamline case processing and enhance successful prosecutions.

Lastly, corruption undermines migration policy enforcement, allowing traffickers to operate with impunity, which also contributes to eroding of public trust in law enforcement agencies. The study recommends that there in need for establishment of strict mechanisms to detect and eliminate corruption among law enforcement officers and impose stringent penalties for unethical practices.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Future research could explore the role of bilateral and regional agreements between Kenya and Somalia in addressing human trafficking. This would provide insights into how improved international cooperation can enhance enforcement efforts and disrupt trafficking networks.

In addition, a study on how the integration of advanced surveillance technology, such as artificial intelligence, biometric identification, and drones, can improve border security and migration control is important. This would help identify technological innovations that could strengthen policy implementation and enforcement.

Further research can also be done to investigate the link between corruption among border officials, law enforcement, and human traffickers to provide critical insights into systemic weaknesses that allow trafficking to persist. This research would help develop anti-corruption strategies to improve migration policy enforcement.

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