

LAW PhD RESEARCH PROJECT

Beyond Borders: Mapping the Global Patterns of Women and Children Trafficking

Supervisor: Associate Professor Joshua Aston and Dr Mostafa Naser

Summary

Human trafficking, a crime against humanity, involves the violation of human rights, human dignity, and exploitation, predominantly targeting women and children. It encompasses forced prostitution, sexual slavery, forced labour, and other forms of exploitation across the world. The magnitude of this crime is staggering, with annual transactions amounting to billions of dollars, highlighting its pervasive nature. Despite international legal frameworks such as the UNTOC and the Palermo Protocol, trafficking continues to thrive, with increasing rates observed globally. To combat this shameful crime effectively, legal measures prioritizing victim welfare and sustainable societal development are essential. Inclusive growth strategies that protect human rights for all are crucial for long-term eradication. By fostering societal development and ensuring human rights protection, we can work towards eliminating human trafficking and safeguarding both victims and society as a whole.

Detailed Explanation

In addition to being one of the fastest growing organized crimes in the world, human trafficking is a ruthless and thriving business. This industry, with billions of dollars in net worth, pushes millions of adults and children into commercial sexual servitude, forced labour, and bonded labour. The urgent need to combat this abhorrent crime and protect human rights has deeply resonated with the United Nations and nations worldwide. Governments globally have made extensive efforts to eliminate human trafficking, particularly the exploitation of women and children. Despite leadership from the United Nations, numerous NGOs, and governmental bodies, it is distressing that significant harm has already been inflicted on women and children before the full extent of this issue was recognized by international and state authorities.

Human trafficking, considered one of the gravest crimes globally, encompasses the violation of human rights and dignity, predominantly affecting women and children through forced prostitution, sexual slavery, and forced labour worldwide. This illicit activity has become one of the most profitable enterprises globally, posing a serious threat to humanity. Victims suffer various forms of exploitation, including sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, coercion into illicit activities, and deprivation of basic human rights. Eliminating trafficking in women and children cannot solely rely on implementing protocols and conventions due to significant financial interests involved. The parallels between combating this trafficking and addressing narcotics smuggling highlight the lucrative nature of this crime, with transactions involving billions of dollars annually. This scourge operates as both a national and international crime, cutting across socio-economic strata.

To effectively combat this shameful crime and prevent further exploitation, the United Nations has collaborated with states worldwide to establish an international legal framework, including the UNTOC and the Palermo Protocol. However, despite these efforts, trafficking continues to thrive, as evidenced by alarming statistics from various studies and research. Combating this crime requires prioritizing victim welfare and promoting sustainable societal development through inclusive growth strategies endorsed by all sectors.

This project aims to deepen our understanding of the complexities surrounding human trafficking, including its root causes, mechanisms, and impacts on individuals, communities, and societies. Research findings can raise public awareness about the prevalence and severity of human trafficking, fostering empathy and mobilizing support for anti-trafficking efforts.

Here are some potential research questions:

1. What are the primary push and pull factors contributing to human trafficking in [specific region/country]?
2. How do various socioeconomic, political, and cultural elements impact the susceptibility of diverse populations to human trafficking?
3. What are the most common recruitment methods used by traffickers, and how have these methods evolved over time?
4. What are the short-term and long-term physical, psychological, and social impacts of human trafficking on survivors?
5. How effective are current legal frameworks and law enforcement strategies in combating human trafficking, and what are the main challenges and barriers to their implementation?
6. What are the ethical considerations and dilemmas involved in conducting research on human trafficking, particularly concerning survivor confidentiality and safety?
7. How can prevention and awareness-raising efforts be tailored to effectively target at-risk populations and potential traffickers?
8. What are the most promising practices and innovations in survivor rehabilitation, reintegration, and long-term support programs?

Reference List

1. Aston, J. (2016). *Trafficking of Women and Children: Article 7 of the Rome Statute*. 1st edition, Oxford University Press.
2. Aston, J., Anthony Das, C. (2023). Inquiry into the rights of women and children. Parliament of Australia. Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade – Human Rights Subcommittee. [https://doi.org/file:///D:/jaston/Downloads/Parliamentary%20Inquiry%20 Final%20Submission%20\(2\).pdf](https://doi.org/file:///D:/jaston/Downloads/Parliamentary%20Inquiry%20Final%20Submission%20(2).pdf).
3. Chisolm-Straker, M., & Chon, K. (Eds.). (2021). *The historical roots of human trafficking : informing primary prevention of commercialized violence*. Springer. [10.1007/978-3-030-70675-3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-70675-3)
4. Cordisco Tsai, L., Carlson, C., Baylosis, R., Hentschel, E., Nicholson, T., Eleccion, J., Ubaldo, J., Stanley, B., Brown, G. K., & Wainberg, M. (2022). Practitioner experiences responding to suicide risk for survivors of human trafficking in the philippines. *Qualitative Health Research*, 32(3), 556–570. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497323211062858>.
5. Gupta, P. (2019). Transnational human trafficking: an unsolved issue. *International Journal of Political Activism and Engagement (Ijpae)*, 6(2), 30–41. <https://doi.org/10.4018/IJPAE.2019040103>
6. Massey, S., & Rankin, G. (2020). *Exploiting people for profit : trafficking in human beings*. Palgrave Macmillan.
7. Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>

8. UNODC report on human trafficking exposes modern form of slavery.
<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/global-report-on-trafficking-in-persons.html>
9. Winterdyk, J., & Jones, J. M. (Eds.). (2019). *The palgrave international handbook of human trafficking*. Palgrave Macmillan.
[10.1007/978-3-319-63192-9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63192-9)